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# Modes of Participation: Co-creative Approaches to the Design Process

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## ***Modes of Participation:***

Co-creative Approaches to the Design Process

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**Submitted to the faculty of the School  
of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth  
University in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree,  
Master of Fine Arts in Design: Visual  
Communications.**

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**Modes of Participation:**

**Co-creative Approaches to the Design Process**

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I would like to offer thanks to my committee, Roy McKelvey, Mary McLaughlin, and Liz Sanders, whose guidance, support and encouragement throughout my graduate studies have had a profound impact on my development. I am grateful for your tremendous amount of help, flexibility, and mentorship.

I am indebted to the graduate design faculty who provided abundant opportunities for me in their classes to pursue my interest in participation and whose inspiration is infectious. I am still trying to unpack all of the wonderful things that you have taught me.

I am very thankful for the support and encouragement offered by my fellow graduate students. We walked together during one stage of an unforgettable journey, and I won't soon forget my fellow travellers.

For unending love, encouragement, service, understanding and devotion, I owe thanks to my husband, Justin. And last but certainly not least, I would be nothing without God and his great love for me first. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

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This project explores the notion of participation within the graphic design and problem-solving process. Through projects using generative tools\* and collaboration, I explore ways to instigate controlled participation\*\* from designers and non-designers. I observe and document how the methods and means of participation affect the creative process during these projects.

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\* Generative tools is being defined as objects and methods used in design research that promote making as a means of obtaining information about people.

\*\* Controlled participation means that the participation I instigate in these investigations is in some way prescribed or ordered.

## Looking Closer

Tomás Maldonado writes about design:

**“To create is frequently to form the life of others, but in some cases it can contribute to deform and even to damage—or destroy—the life of others.”<sup>1</sup>**

Maldonado's cautionary words touch on the power of making, of designing. To create an object or a thing and insert it into the life of another person is an assertion of power, even if that thing is purchased by choice. The objects we sit on, listen to, learn from, communicate with, and the spaces in which live and work, form us. They provide social interstices for interaction and can mold how we behave toward one another. For example, the cellular phone and text messaging have already changed the landscape of language and communication.

However, if the act of designing is an assertion of power, then what of the designer's responsibility? The power of creation not only effects how we interact with one another, in many cases irresponsible design—and with it, crass consumerism—can literally destroy the lives of others. Our world is littered with objects of design: millions of cell phones, refrigerators, and computers pile up in landfills in developing countries, leaking toxic chemicals into the environment.<sup>2</sup> In fact, in 2005 a landslide of trash killed 150 people in the city of Cimahi, Indonesia.

Traditionally, graphic designers approach the cause of social change through conventional means: advocacy, promotion, and education. However these efforts do not necessarily involve an exchange of power from the designer/creator to the everyday person\* and the audience of such efforts is largely the affluent public, living in the developed world.

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1 Tomás Maldonado, “Design Education” in *Education of Vision*, ed. Gyorgy Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1965), 122.

2 National Geographic GeoPedia, “E-Waste,” <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/geopedia/E-Waste>.

\* Everyday people is being defined as those individuals who are not formally trained in the visual arts and design fields and whose positions are potential users or consumers of a product, service, or system

I wonder: is there a more direct and grassroots way that graphic designers can make a positive difference in social problems?

Can the design community be a part of making things that not only promote good causes but also practically and appropriately meet human need?

My concern with the above questions provided an entry point that led to my interest in participatory design. I traced a rabbit-trail of ideas before arriving at this interest: sustainable design, design for social change, ethnographic research, and community design. However, all of these ideas seemed to be ends in themselves that offered nowhere to start in my graphic design practice.

I began deconstructing my experiences in the world—good and bad—as a means of understanding how these concepts related to my personal design practice. I wanted to find out what assumptions I held about graphic design and its place in the realm of social change. I remembered my experience collaborating on the design of a public-information exhibit. I recalled my travels to central Tanzania, working with women on a solar cooking project and observing cultural practices. I recollected my experience working in the architecture field observing the processes and ideals that informed client relationships, and eventually, the design of buildings.

It became evident to me after this review that the processes used in design greatly influence how the resulting products are received by the public. To build upon the ideas of Tomás

Maldonado, I realized it is not only the singular act of creating that frequently forms the lives of others; it is also the *process* of creating that contributes to the formation or deformation of others.

For example:

The process by which a group of designers engages a community about a public-information exhibit during the design development process is an important factor contributing to the exhibit becoming a community resource.

The process by which a designer works to educate a rural community in a developing country about a sustainable technology is vital to the acceptance and use of that technology in the community over time.

The process by which an architect works along side the potential users of a building during the design and programming stage is critical to the building meeting the needs of those individuals in the present and future.

In these experiences, I observed missed opportunities where involving the potential users of the designed object or system—

through a participatory design process—could have manifested positive social impact, and the designed object could have moved from a commodity to a resource.

While process is important, I observed that it also relies heavily on human relationships. Whether a designer is trying to sway a client to accept a more sustainable building material or trying to educate a community on solar cooking practices, it is the trusting relationship between the designer and the individual that catalyzes change. And the issue cuts both ways. By shaking off preconceived notions about what designers think people need or want, they can approach clients and their design problems as opportunities to learn and to listen. By developing these relationships, designers can take time to ask the right questions and to listen to people's hopes, needs, wants, and dreams, and allow their responses to inform the design process and product. And with these relationships, designers can gather people together around causes or projects—perhaps catalyzing creative collaboration for social good.

While my investigations into participation and collaboration are informed by the idea that involving outsiders in a design process is important—particularly when trying to enact social change—they

are also an exploration of relationship in the design process: the relationship between designers and their collaborators and the relationship between designers and users, or everyday people.

I realized that the social change that designers are hoping to address—whether behavioral or social or political—starts on a fundamentally incremental, grassroots level. The problem of e-waste littering parts of the African continent, for example, starts with one person being more responsible with the disposal of their cell phone. Any change I seek in the design profession starts with my interactions and relationships with clients, collaborators, and everyday people. For me, this is where it all starts.

# *Why We Need Participation*

## WHY IS PARTICIPATION WORTH EXPLORING?

Whether one is undertaking a project with an unfamiliar or a familiar community, participation by everyday people in a problem-solving process is critical. The need for participation is perhaps most evident when embarking on a project with an unfamiliar community. For example, in a place such as rural Kenya, participation by indigenous persons in a design-oriented project can ensure its long-term sustainability, and it is often the most culturally sensitive way to enact positive behavioral change. However, when working on a local level—perhaps with a familiar community in the developed world—participation may seem less critical. Involving outsiders in a design project inevitably involves more time and effort on the part of the design team, and if the design team is being paid by a company or institution then participation must be seen by the investor as a worthy (and billable) pursuit. These are serious barriers preventing designers from mounting efforts to include the thoughts, needs, and opinions of everyday people in the products, services, and systems they design.

## PARTICIPATION AS EMPOWERMENT

Participation—even the most diminutive and controlled participation—empowers everyday people in aspects of the problem-solving process. All of us, designers and non-designers alike, are users and consumers in some capacity. Most of us use designed-things on a daily basis: the easy-checkout system at our local grocery store, the internet, and email, for example. Most of us drive cars and depend

upon complex traffic and signage systems the design of which has serious impact on our safety. Others ride public transportation and use equally complex and vital transportation and communication systems. Shouldn't we, as users, have input in the design and use of these things to a certain extent? While most of us are not systems engineers, we are all certainly knowledgeable about our experiences driving, riding, watching, clicking, and shopping. We can give voice to what is good and bad. We can articulate how our experiences using these complex systems and products could be better relative to our individual lives.

By encouraging outside participation in the design, development, and refinement of products and systems, designers gain an inside track into understanding the hopes, dreams, and fears of everyday people. Designers can get closer to anticipating actual use and experience because the potential user is close and manifest rather than distant and imagined. Further, by tapping the creativity of everyday people in the design research process, unexpected

information and issues relating to experience can be discovered. Designers can learn more than just how a product might be used—they can inquire how past experience informs current experience as well as how the future experience could be made better.

And it is in the combination of present and future experience that sustainable design innovation occurs. Though designers might try to shape the future through the innovative creation of products and systems—it is their use by everyday people that will ensure the product or system's long-term sustainability. Unfortunately, there have been too many cases of an “if we build it, they will come” attitude relative to design innovation. While participation is by no means the singular answer to this problem, investigating actual needs, actual wants, and anticipated use is a key part of the process of identifying how innovative products and systems can integrate into and enhance future lifestyles.



## PARTICIPATION IS ALREADY HAPPENING

Introducing participation into the design research process is important, and in many ways it is already happening. Ongoing advances in technology have catalyzed participation by leveling certain playing fields and by offering more consumer choice. Technologies that were once available only to a select few are now ubiquitous, and designed systems are becoming more malleable, accommodating increased consumer choice and modification. Through blogs and social networks, people are interacting in a more participatory fashion with their online world. As this trend continues to evolve, people's expectation for more participation in, and customization of, the products and systems they use will only increase.

Participatory design as research method has been in existence since at least the 1970's. Originally calling the method, "the collective research approach," Scandinavian researchers tried to develop strategies that allowed union workers to provide input in the development of computer applications in their workplace. These researchers developed an action research approach which emphasized, "the active cooperation between researchers and those being researched."<sup>3</sup> Largely a Scandinavian phenomenon at its start, the movement toward a more participatory, or

human-centered, approach to research has infiltrated the culture of corporations and institutions globally. Design firms such as IDEO and Adaptive Path employ these research methods both as a means of improving known technologies and systems and as a means of developing new ones.

## OPEN-ENDED PARTICIPATION

Participatory methods can be applied to answer problems associated with things that already exist, such as improving the usability of a software package or designing a more ergonomic office chair. Increasingly, participatory research methods are being used to probe into the unknown future. IDEO Creative Director Jane Suri writes:

"These days, many of the innovation challenges we face in the workplace are framed in an even more open ended way...In this much more radical context, it is much less clear what kinds of innovations might catch on and how new offerings might influence people's future habits, which presents a different challenge to research; how can you find out what is going to matter to people if it doesn't yet exist?"<sup>4</sup>

This concern is as much a designer's problem as it is a researcher's problem. And in some cases these roles are one and the same. Participation that is open-ended and ongoing—not one-sided and closed—provides the best opportunity for innovation and creative involvement by participants. This type of participation is exploratory in

<sup>3</sup> Suzanne Bødker, "Creating Conditions for Participation: Conflicts and Resources in Systems Design," *Human Computer Interaction*, 11(3) (1996): 218.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Fulton Suri, "Informing our Intuition: Design Research for Radical Innovation," *Rotman Magazine*, Winter (2008): 54.

nature and seeks to answer the question “what?” instead of “how?” “What” questions may include, “In what new ways are people using cell phones?” or, “What can be built that can promote feelings of better community?” This way of asking questions is often called the pre-design stage. Design researcher Liz Sanders describes this part of the design process as a time when, “...it is often not known whether the deliverable of a design process will be a product, a service, an interface, [or] a building...”<sup>5</sup>

By pursuing the question “what” in an open-ended way, design researchers can provide opportunities for the true needs, wants, and dreams of everyday people to be expressed and explored. In theory, open-ended research also allows design researchers to explore questions without the limitations of formal concerns and unreasonable deadlines. For example, a project undertaken by design researchers about cell phone use could lead researchers to explore communication technologies in a broader sense, and the resulting research may provide an unexpected solution to an unforeseen problem.

Through an open-ended participatory process, designers can develop methods to understand people’s perceptions of their experiences and by doing so, establish empathy with them.<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, participatory and human-centered research has pursued this information through the use of observational

research (ethnographic research), focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires. However according to Sanders, these methods only access part of the information that is necessary to establish empathy with the experiences of every day people.<sup>7</sup> Observing people shows us what they do, and holding focus groups can help us understand what they say. However, “discovering what people think and know provides us with their perceptions of experience. Understanding how people feel gives us the ability to empathize with them.”<sup>8</sup>

In order to access this type of information, special tools are required that enable people to project and express. These tools focus on what people make as an expression of dreaming. Sanders advocates engaging in talking, doing, and making simultaneously as a means of understanding people’s experiences and establishing empathy. Her approach, called *Make Tools*, provides individuals with visual toolkits for self-expression. These toolkits can be oriented toward understanding cognitive processes—such as maps or models—or toward understanding emotions—through collages or diaries.<sup>9</sup> The toolkits are extremely flexible, and are adapted according to what kind of information the design researcher is trying to understand as well as who is using them. Sanders calls the toolkits a “design language” that is, “built upon the aesthetics of experience rather than an aesthetics of form.”<sup>10</sup>

5 Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers, “Co-creation and the new landscapes of design,” *CoDesign* 4, no.1 (2008), 2. [www.maketools.com](http://www.maketools.com)

6 Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders, “From User-Centered to Participatory Design,” (2002), 3, [www.maketools.com](http://www.maketools.com).

7 Sanders, “From User-Centered,” 3–4. 10 Ibid, 4.

8 Ibid, 3.

9 Ibid, 5.

## SHIFTING LANDSCAPE IN THE GRAPHIC DESIGN FIELD

Sanders' research into how to engender meaningful participation by everyday people coincides with ongoing issues and trends in the graphic design field. The field is becoming more pervasive and problems are becoming more complex. As new technologies emerge, design specialties are becoming more distinct. The American Institute of Graphic Artists' (AIGA) Visionary Design Council acknowledged this fact in their online publication "The Designer of 2015." In this article, the AIGA predicts that the graphic design field will become increasingly concerned with sociological and anthropological methods of interacting with "users" and solving complicated, interconnected problems. They highlighted an emphasis on participation and research into community structures as an extension of graphic design practice.<sup>11</sup> North Carolina State College of Design professor Meredith Davis affirmed these visionary statements, arguing that these concerns should shift the approach to graphic design pedagogy as well.<sup>12</sup>

Because the concerns of the graphic design field are changing and expanding, the role of the graphic designer is also changing. To be a graphic designer no longer means working with points, picas, and pixels. Nor does being a graphic designer mean that

one necessarily produces a physical object. Increasingly, graphic designers are concerned with 'design thinking' as a method of problem solving rather than limiting themselves to just form making. Relative to participatory design, graphic designers are learning how to be skilled facilitators in addition to arbiters of form.

With this change evident and still developing in the design field, my investigation seeks to understand how participatory design can fit into the design and problem solving process. By opening up the design process to the involvement of everyday people through participatory design—and to other designers and artists through collaboration—designers share the power inherent in form-giving. The design community at large becomes more knowledgeable, more flexible, and more interdisciplinary through this kind of knowledge-sharing. And ultimately, we can move closer to creating things that fulfill the real needs and wants of people, now and in the future.

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<sup>11</sup> American Institute of Graphic Artists, "Defining the Designer of 2015: Trends," <http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/designer-of-2015-trends>

<sup>12</sup> Meredith Davis, "Toto, I've Got a Feeling We're Not in Kansas Anymore...", "Interactions Magazine, Sept/Oct. (2008), 28.

## KEY QUESTIONS

A large part of my investigation into participation in the design and problem solving process is focused on methods. For example, how does a designer effectively invite in the participation of, say, another designer into their design process? What ramifications does participation have for the outcome of a collaborative project? How do the objectives or goals of a project dictate the type of participation that should be pursued?

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*Below are some questions I intend to address with my investigations:*

### **How are toolkits used in practice?**

In theory, generative toolkits can help a designer to better understand the people they are designing with. How are they used in practice?

### **How might toolkits be expanded or adapted to meet different project criteria?**

How can they be adapted to address different problems and different questions?  
What are their limitations?

### **What are the methods and technologies that graphic designers can use to encourage participation?**

### **What are the barriers to participation?**

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# REIMAGINED WORKS

## COLLABORATIVE EXHIBIT

A Public Information Exhibit in Waynesboro, Virginia

## COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

Visual Storytelling through Re-purposed Books

## *Collaborative Exhibit* // A Public Information Exhibit in Waynesboro, Virginia

In 2005, I was asked to participate in the design of a permanent public-information exhibit to be installed in downtown Waynesboro, Virginia. The exhibit's purpose is to inform the public about the pervasive mercury contamination in the main waterway in the town, the South River. Historically, the town of Waynesboro relied heavily on the local acetic fiber manufacturing facility—owned by DuPont—as a major source of employment. Between the years 1929 and 1950 the factory used mercury sulfate in the manufacturing process, and mercury was released into the environment during this period of time.<sup>13</sup>

In response to the contamination, DuPont has endeavored to study and remediate the mercury in the waterway and in the adjacent watertable through their participation in the South River Science Team. The team is a joint task-force of scientists from organizations such as the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and others.<sup>14</sup>

The exhibit seeks to educate the public about the scientific tests being conducted as a means of studying the mercury contamination, and a portion of the exhibit space operates as an office for the Science Team. This flexibility enables the public to access not only the static information in the exhibit but also the scientists if they seek additional information.

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<sup>13</sup> South River Science Team, "Dupont"  
<http://www.southriverscienceteam.org/about/participants/dupont/index.html>

<sup>14</sup> South River Science Team, <http://www.southriverscienceteam.org>







The design team was comprised of graphic design and interior design faculty members at James Madison University as well as professional designers (such as myself) and student volunteers. The team worked collaboratively on the project, with the most fluid collaboration occurring during the beginning design development stage. During this stage, we worked on the color themes for the exhibit, typographic style, and the logo for the South River Science Team. Once these items were decided, we began to refine the number and orientation of the display boards as well as the content of the boards. I worked closely with scientists and stakeholders from DuPont in order to refine the content so that it was appropriate for each display board.

The process of being involved in this type of project, as well as seeing the final accomplishment of the team, provoked my interest in the power of collaboration and participation. Any exhibition design project is inherently collaborative, however my involvement in this project as a young designer taught me how effective this way of working can be. At the same time, I wondered,

**“What would be different about the final design if we had involved the public more in the design process?”**

I wondered if the information displayed on the boards could have been more relevant to the general public, including children.

**So while collaboration can be an effective process for designers working together, how can it also be effective for designers who want to involve the public in their process?**

## South River Science Team

Since the discovery of mercury contamination in the South River

in the mid 1970s, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ), Game and Inland Fisheries (VDIF), and Health (VDH) have monitored fish, water and sediment to understand the mercury distribution in the estuary. Since 1986, a fish consumption advisory has been in effect for the South River and the South Fork Roanoke River. The South River Science Team was formed in 2001 to serve as a check point for critical issues concerning mercury in the South River and downstream watersheds. The team is a cooperative effort between local, state, and federal agencies, representation from academia, citizen groups, and

VDIF. In addition to providing technical direction for the mercury monitoring conducted in the South River, the team's focus includes conducting river studies to better understand mercury distribution and behavior, acquiring new technologies, and ensuring that there is effective communication provided to the rest of the state. Advances in the understanding of mercury behavior in the environment, coupled with continued river monitoring, will provide the tools necessary to make informed decisions about managing river resources in the future.

44 The team's focus includes conducting river studies to better understand mercury distribution and behavior. 55

### List of Organizations

VA Dept of Environmental Quality  
VA Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries  
VA Dept of Health  
DuPont Corporate Remediation Group  
US Geological Survey  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Virginia Tech  
Eastern Mennonite University  
James Madison University  
University of Delaware  
Friends of the Roanoke River  
South Potomac Chapter  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

south river  
SCIENCE TEAM



Group photo of the South River Science Team.

### STATE AGENCIES

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES  
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

### INDUSTRY

DU PONT CORPORATE REMEDIATION GROUP

### FEDERAL AGENCIES

US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION 3  
US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

### ACADEMICS

COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY  
EASTERN Mennonite UNIVERSITY  
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY  
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
VIRGINIA TECH

### CITIZENS' GROUPS

FRIENDS OF THE SHENANDOAH RIVER  
CRAK WALTON LEAGUE  
CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

## *Collaborative Storytelling* // Visual Storytelling Through Re-purposed Books

In the spring semester of 2008, students in a graduate workshop were instructed to participate in a collaborative storytelling project. The project was born out of the subject matter of the course: memory. Students were asked to write down a self-defining memory on a piece of paper, seal it in an envelope, and give it to the professor. A self-defining memory can be defined as a memory that in some way defines your person. It is a memory that you know backwards and forwards, like an old song or a favorite movie.

Students were then asked to acquire a used book that had some correlation to the self-defining memory. Students re-purposed the book as a means of visually “telling” their memory to one another. Every week students switched books with a designated partner, visually responding to the material and passing the books back to their owner.

The owner of each book had no control over how their partner responded to the visual material in the book. This often yielded unexpected results: pages torn and cut, previous work marked over or edited, and sometimes the book cover entirely ripped out. While only the method and medium of the collaboration was prescribed, the outcome was uncontrolled. There was a level of trust implied in the collaboration because each person trusted one another with their book and its contents. It was

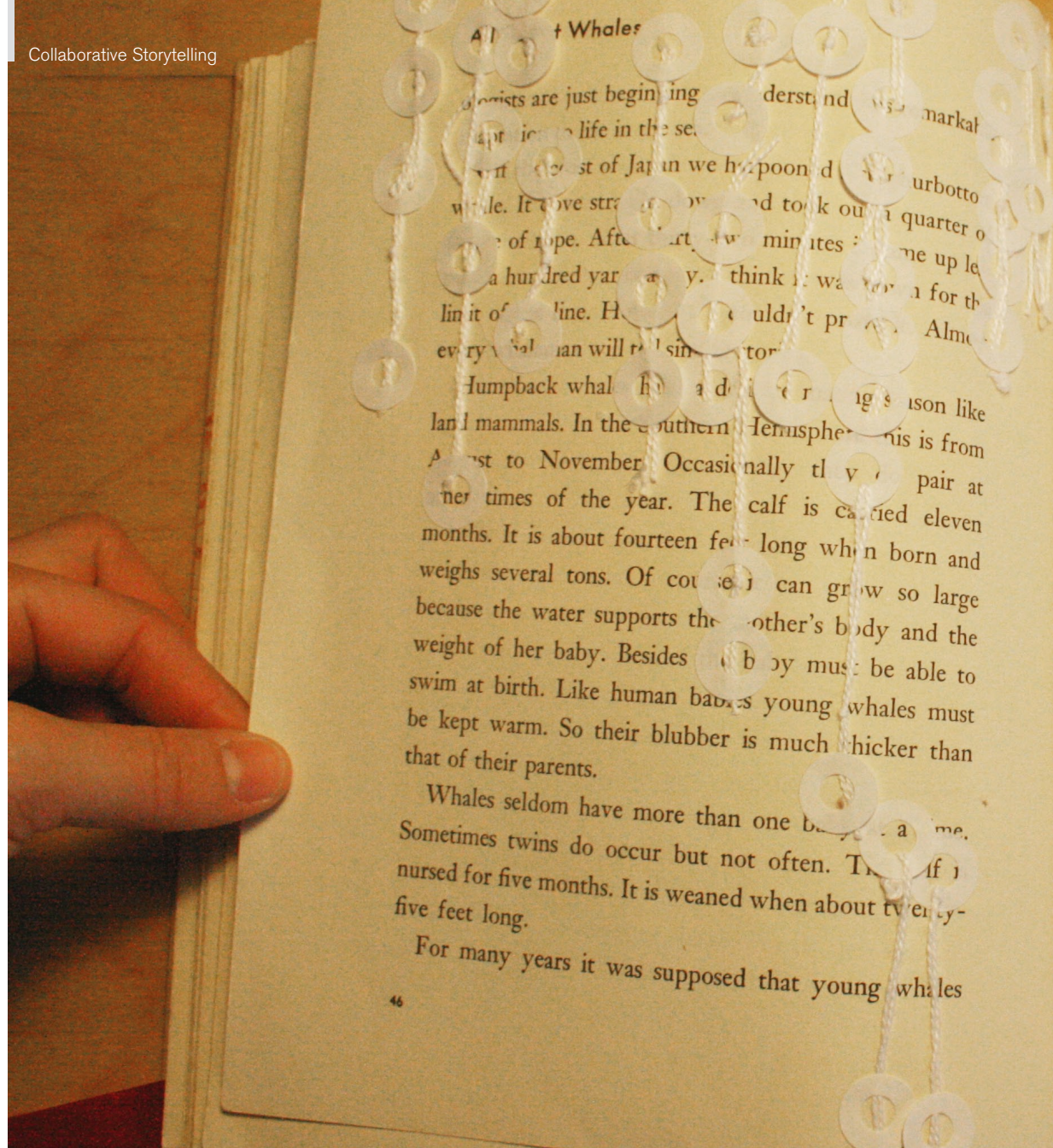






interesting to observe how the prescribed nature of the collaboration helped define the role of the collaborator within the domain of the project. This definition did not hamper each person's creativity, rather it provided a helpful framework in which each person felt free to participate.

I observed how the collaboration functioned like a conversation between two friends. Sometimes the conversation was one-sided. Sometimes it was equal. One could apply the metaphor of "shouting" or "whispering" to the way the books were re-purposed by each person. There was a spirit of "give-and-take" because everyone had equal editing rights.



## All About Whales

Whale-ists are just beginning to understand the market for life in the sea. In the west of Japan we harpooned a humpback whale. It dove straight down and took out a quarter of a mile of rope. After about ten minutes it came up less than a hundred yards away. I think it was a for the line of the line. He couldn't prove it. Almost every whale man will tell you the same story.

Humpback whales have a breeding season like land mammals. In the southern hemisphere this is from August to November. Occasionally they pair at other times of the year. The calf is carried eleven months. It is about fourteen feet long when born and weighs several tons. Of course it can grow so large because the water supports the mother's body and the weight of her baby. Besides, a baby must be able to swim at birth. Like human babies young whales must be kept warm. So their blubber is much thicker than that of their parents.

Whales seldom have more than one baby at a time. Sometimes twins do occur but not often. The calf is nursed for five months. It is weaned when about twenty-five feet long.

For many years it was supposed that young whales



### Humpback Habits

grew very slowly. They were compared to elephants, the largest land mammals. Elephants do grow slowly, but now we know that whales grow very rapidly. By the end of the first year a humpback calf will be more than twice as long as at birth. At the end of the second year, it is able to have young. Humpbacks usually give birth every two years.

It is impossible to know how long a whale lives. From the condition of the bones, you can tell whether



Four or five humpbacks will leap out of the water together.

Working on this project provided me with new ways of viewing collaboration as an idea. I began to think of collaboration in terms of methods: *how* one initiates and prescribes a collaboration effects the outcome of a project. I considered roles within the framework of collaborating, and I wondered how other collaborations worked in process.



the columns of vapor shooting fifteen feet into the air. I got out my notebook, pencil and stop watch. There were three whales—all humpbacks. They blew at intervals of thirty seconds. This got their lungs well filled with fresh air. Then, as if at a signal, three black bodies slowly rounded into view. Their peller-like flukes were smoothly lifted out of the water and gradually disappeared below the surface. It is impossible to describe the ease and beauty of their ungainly flippers. You would never think they could be grace in any movement. Yet they glide beneath the surface as smoothly as a fish.

"Those whales aren't feeding," said the Captain. "When they bring out the flukes, it means they are. We call it 'sounding.' No telling where they go up next."

By my stop watch the humpbacks were down for fifteen minutes. They rose for two spouts and then down again. The Captain rang for full speed ahead. Soon the ship was on the mirror-like patches of water left by the whales where they went down.

After ten minutes three silvery clouds sailed into the air. They were a quarter of a mile apart.





came the deafening roar of the harpoon gun.



1.

## My First Whale Hunt

"Whales on the port bow!" The shout came from the stern of the whaler *Orion*.

I jumped as though a bomb had exploded near my camera. The shout had come from the barrel at the masthead with a report that made my eyes. He was watching for whales. This was my first whale hunt and I was nervous. Nothing, but the whales were still out there. The Captain tried to show me the spout





# WORKS

## *Case Studies*

### **Sound Collage**

Experimental sound collaboration

### **Dérive: Refuse, Redemption, Recollection**

Collaborative + participatory art installation

### **Prospect Community Project**

Participatory engagement with a Charlottesville community using generative toolkits and participatory methods

### **Art Klatch**

Collaboratively-authored blog

## *Sound Collage* // Experimental sound collaboration

In Fall 2008, students in a Graduate Workshop were asked to visually interpret an essay from John Berger's *The Sense of Sight*. In the essay, Berger describes two interpretations of visual art: Baroque and Renaissance. Students were asked to apply Berger's Baroque and Renaissance frameworks to the 2008 American Presidential elections by creating interpretive collages. Using politics as subject matter, we were asked to create one baroque collage and one renaissance collage.

In response to this problem, I partnered with another graduate student, Jason Dilworth, to collaborate on the creation of the collages. Before beginning the assignment, we both shared our frustrations with the ongoing media coverage of the 2008 election—the “circus-like” frenzy surrounding political candidates and the ostentatious rhetoric used in political speeches. Because of these opinions, we were both interested in creating digital collages using audio media rather than two-dimensional representations.

After discussing the problem and the limitations of digital media, we decided to prescribe the method of collaboration. We wanted to prevent a confusing and frenzied “back and forth” feeling with the collages. However, we both wanted the adaptation of the sound files to flow like a conversation, or a tennis match, in the way that responses are volleyed back and forth.

## We pursued the collaboration in the following fashion:

### STAGE 1

4 FILES ARE PASSED BACK AND FORTH: **2 BAROQUE, 2 RENAISSANCE**

Each file passed is a uncompressed sound file that is a "collage" of found and edited sounds. Once sent a file, we were permitted to edit the file however we wanted, as long as we left the edited sound layers intact. We were not allowed to talk about the edits one another made to the sound, so that the edits themselves acted as a "response." Each collage was 30 seconds long.

**Carissa volleys BAROQUE 1 to Jason.**

Volleyed 4 times and is finished.

**Carissa volleys RENAISSANCE 1 to Jason.**

Volleyed unlimited number of times.

**Jason volleys BAROQUE 1 to Carissa.**

Volleyed unlimited number of times.

**Jason volleys RENAISSANCE 1 to Carissa.**

Volleyed 4 times and is finished.

### STAGE 2

1 FILE IS PASSED, **BAROQUE**

After making 4 separate, 30-second collages we picked the strongest outcome and remixed it into a one-minute collage. We used the same rules as Stage 1.

**Carissa volleys BAROQUE 1 to Jason.**

Volleyed unlimited number of times.

### STAGE 3

#### SOUND VISUALIZATION AND VISUAL SCORE

When we conceived of the collaboration, we both wanted visualization to occur at one stage of the project. We decided to explore separate visual interpretations of the one-minute collage and then combine the interpretations into one 60-second visual score. To interpret the sound visually, we both agreed to listen to the sound in certain environments and record our impressions using whatever visual methods we preferred..

**Carissa listens to the sound in nature.**

[Records impressions](#)

**Carissa listens to the sound in motion.**

[Records impressions](#)

**Jason listens to the sound in nature.**

[Records impressions](#)

**Jason listens to the sound in motion.**

[Records impressions](#)

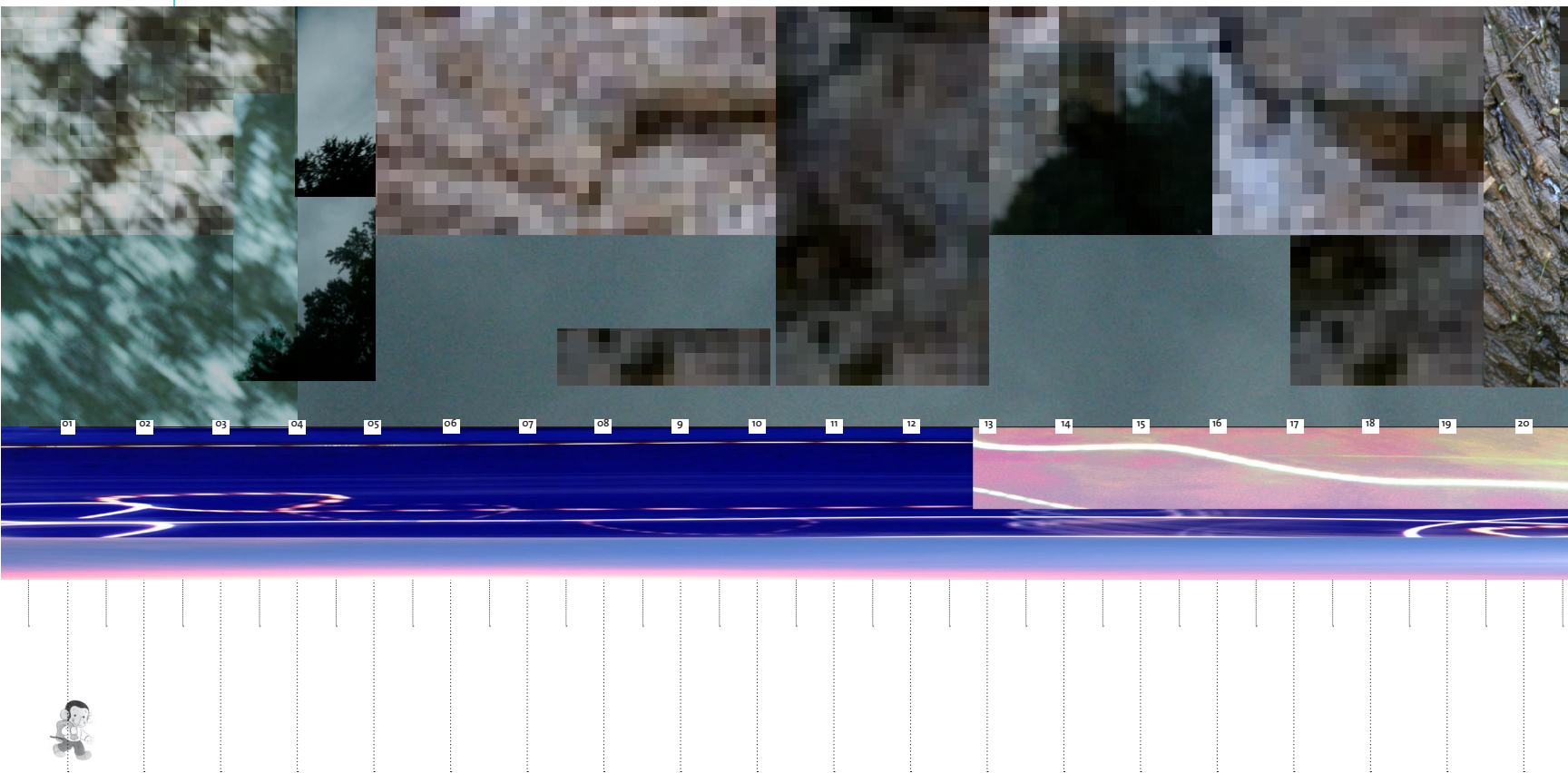
**Jason listens to the sound in studio.**

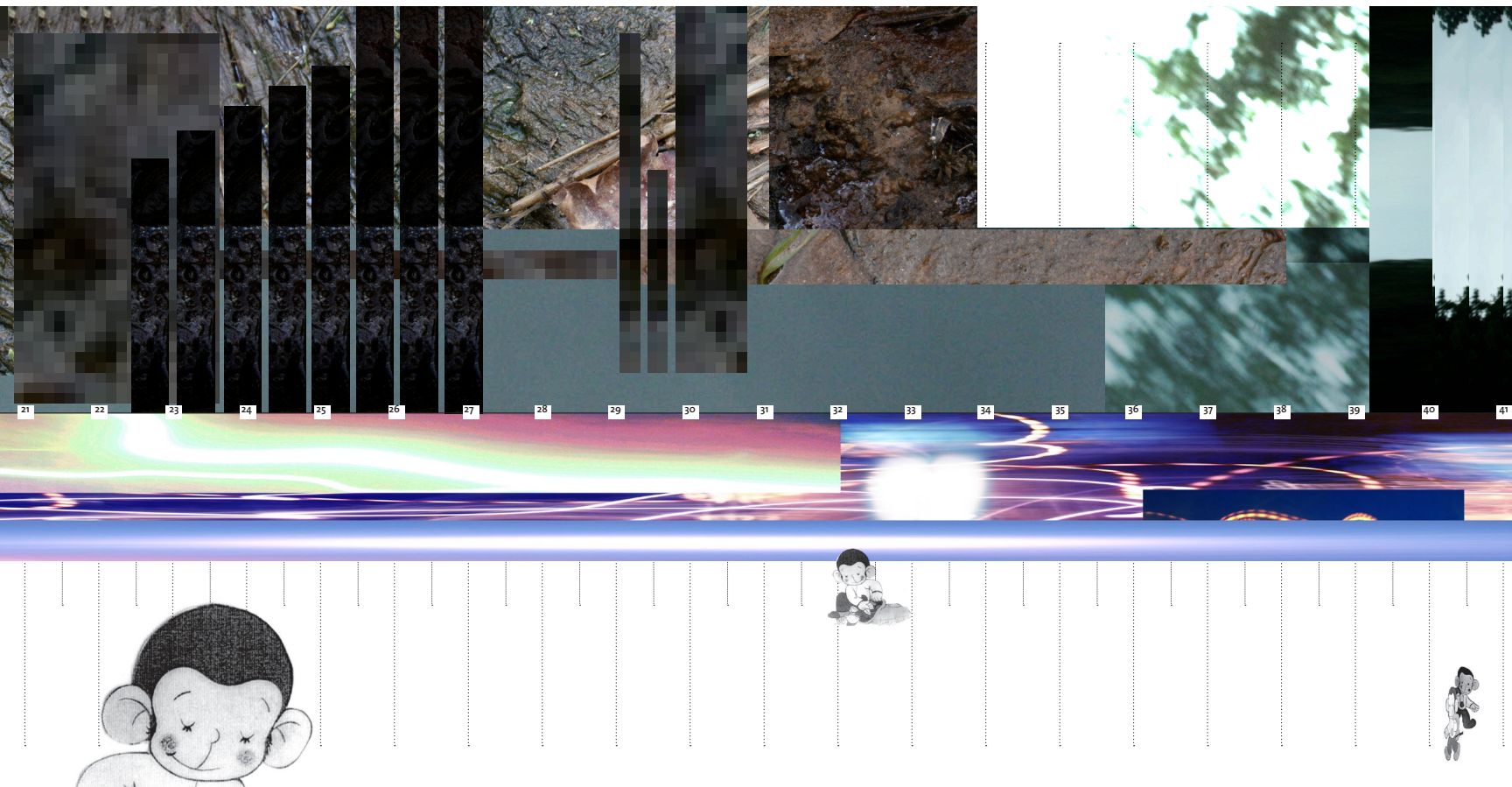
[Records impressions](#)

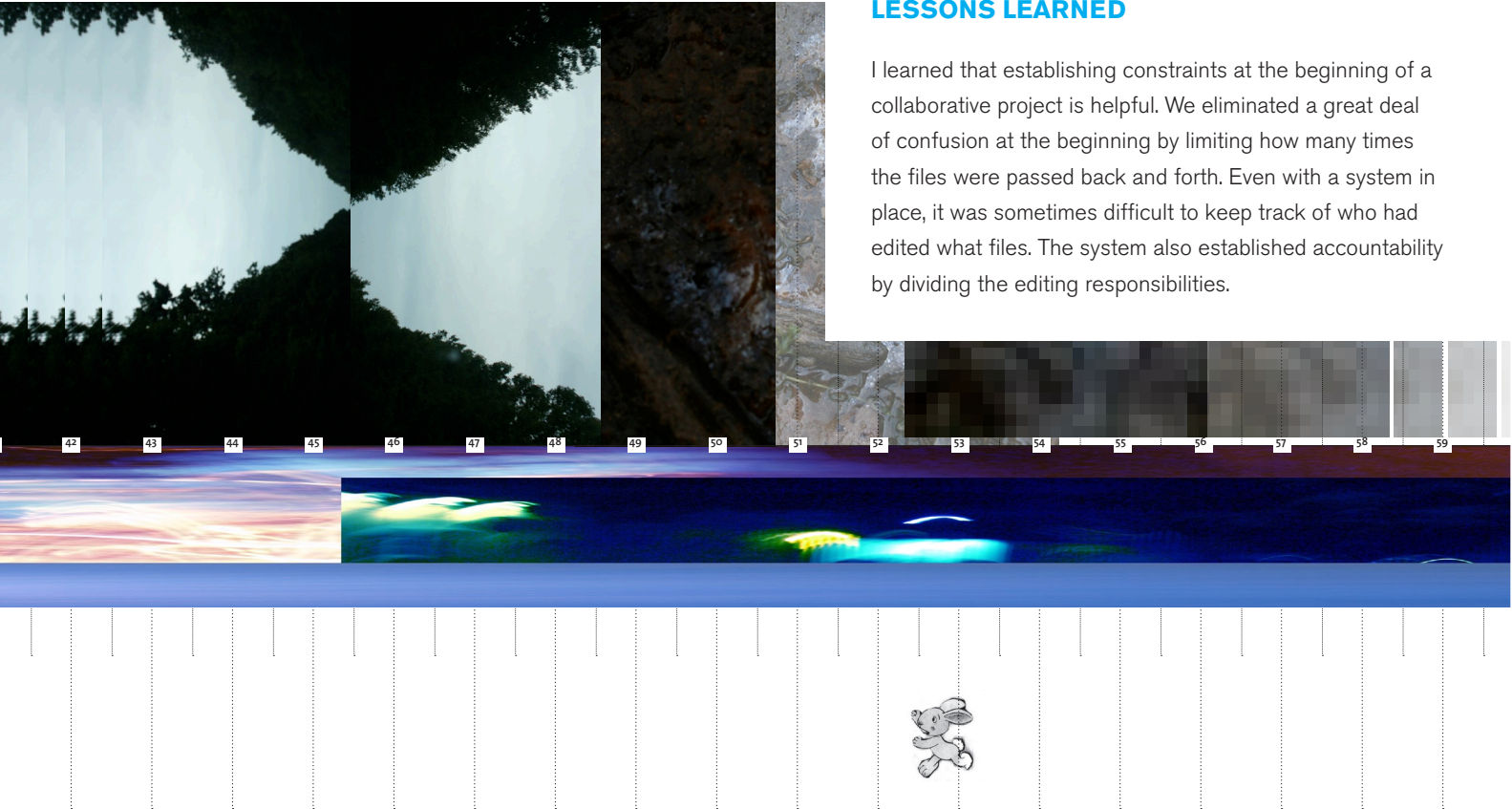
Visual Score  
created in studio  
or workspace

Visual Score  
created in studio  
or workspace

Completed visual score counting off the visual interpretations of the minute-long sound collage. The top of the score represents interpretations by myself, and the bottom half represents interpretations by Jason Dilworth.







## LESSONS LEARNED

I learned that establishing constraints at the beginning of a collaborative project is helpful. We eliminated a great deal of confusion at the beginning by limiting how many times the files were passed back and forth. Even with a system in place, it was sometimes difficult to keep track of who had edited what files. The system also established accountability by dividing the editing responsibilities.



## *Dérive: Refuse, Redemption, Recollection //*

### Collaborative + Participatory Art Installation

In September of 2008, I initiated a collaboration with Charlottesville-based artist, Kate Daughdrill. Kate is a printmaker who is interested in community-focused projects, and her work investigates how the act of creating multiples can engage the public realm. I was familiar with one of her recent projects, where she hand-constructed tents and put them into various public spaces. These tents (staffed by Kate while in the space) invited passersby to enter and write letters to loved ones, to God, and to our political leaders once inside. Kate mailed the letters once the project was complete. Knowing her oeuvre, I perceived that a collaboration between my interest in participation and hers could yield an interesting outcome for us both.

## PROJECT PLANNING

Kate and I began meeting on a weekly basis to discuss the possibilities offered by our potential collaboration. During these meetings we discussed our interests in art, design, and community projects, and we critically analyzed how those interests could take form in a collaboration. After several meetings, we decided that we wanted to do a project in which we handed out something to participants and then created a collaborative art piece with the responses we received. We were both interested in recontextualizing as an idea as well as examining refuse or discarded objects in our work together.

However, we were still largely undecided about the method and means of getting people to participate. Because we knew we wanted to make *something* with whatever people brought to us, the method of participation was extremely important to the project planning. If our method was too constrained, our collaboration would be limited by what people contributed. If our method was too open-ended, we feared that people may feel overwhelmed with too many options and not participate at all. We both agreed that we had to prescribe the participation *just enough* in order to allow

people to feel like they had a framework to effectively participate within. However we needed to make that framework flexible enough to also accommodate people's individualized creative response.

Some of our key questions in the project planning stage were:

*What are we asking people to collect?*

*What should we hand out to people to invite their participation?*

*Should we include what we hand out to people in the final art piece as a way of demonstrating or documenting our process?*

*How else can we document process, and is documentation important?*

*How much do we adapt or alter whatever people give to us when creating the final piece?*

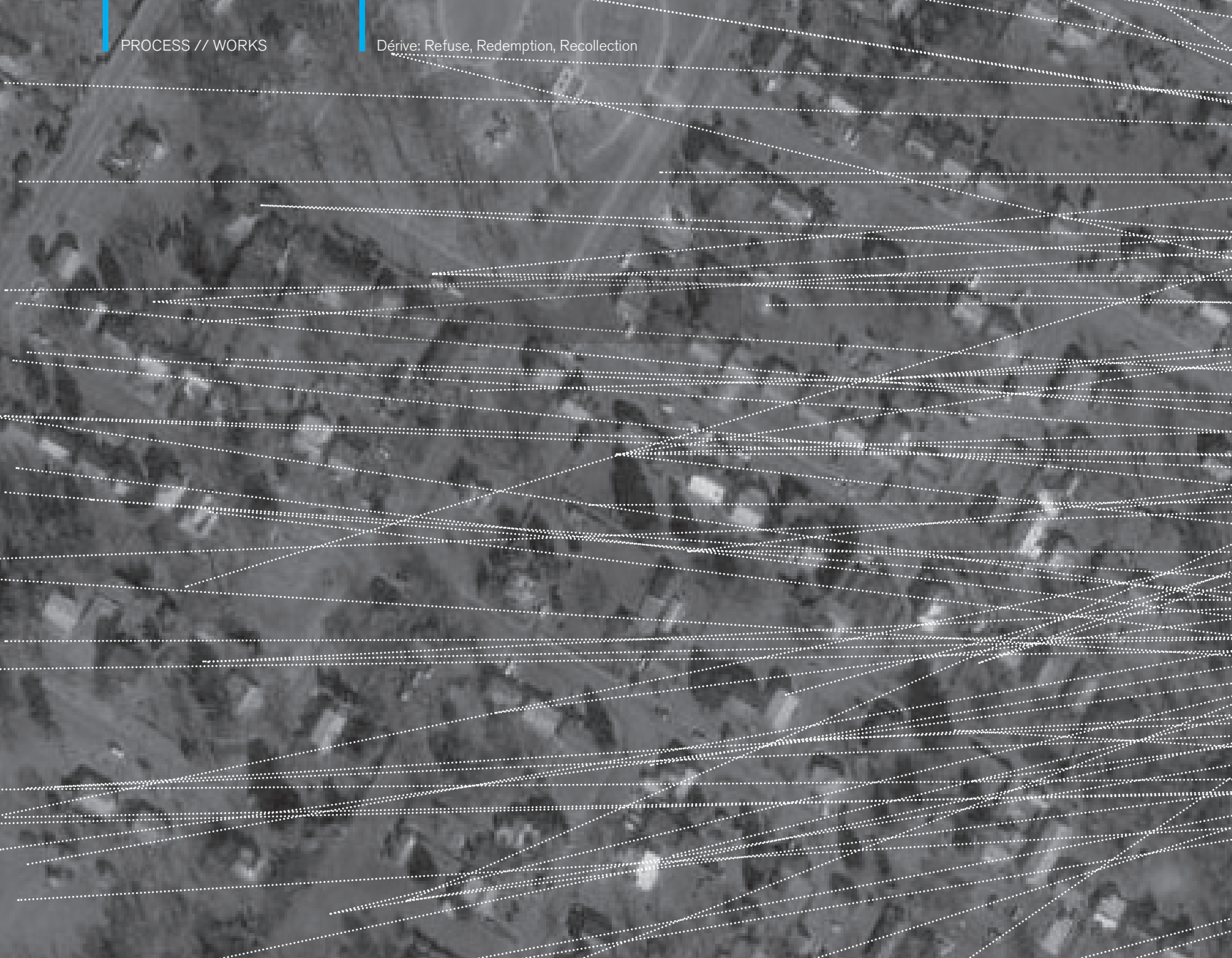


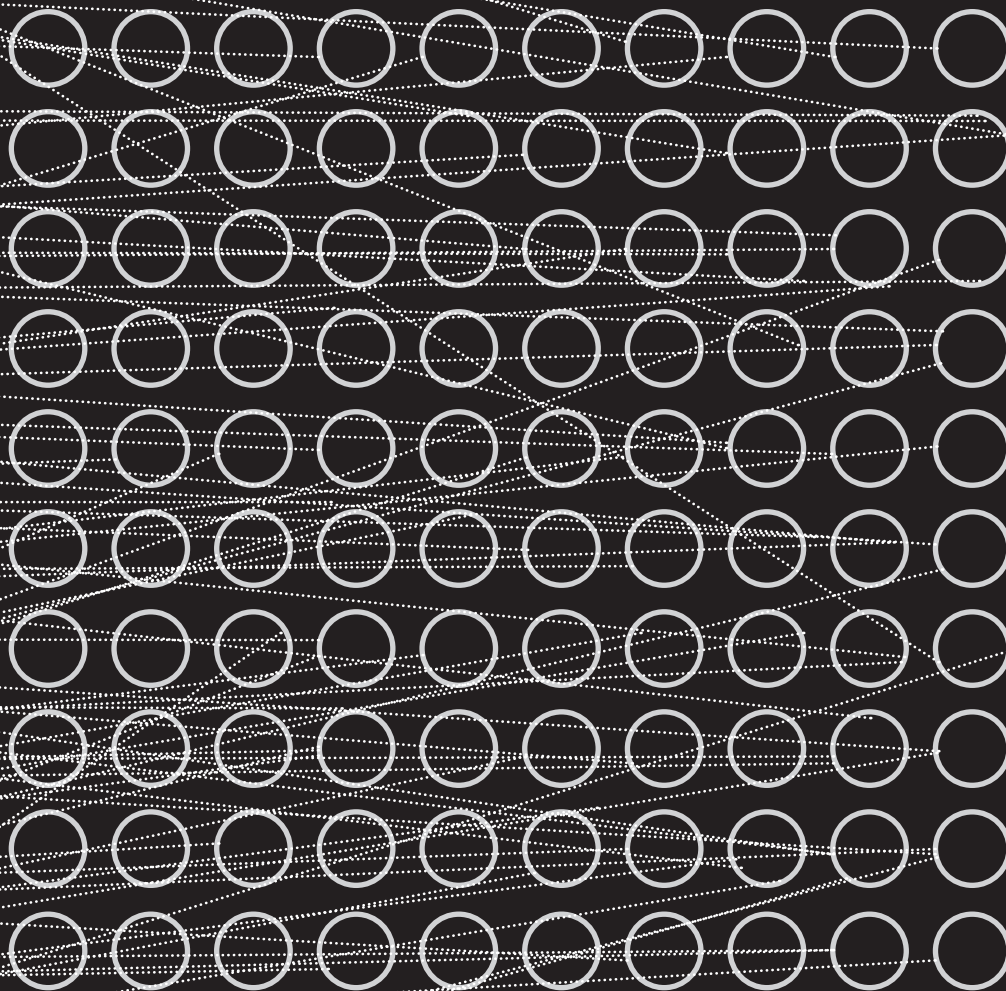
In order to move forward with the project, we went to a local arts and crafts store to look at what materials were available to us. This yielded more discussion about materials and the possible form of the final piece. Serendipitously, we both walked by a display of mason jars and Kate mused, "I would love to one day do a project that used jars." I was thinking the same thing, and turned to Kate and said, "Can we use mason jars in our project?"

The decision to use mason jars answered the question, "*What should we hand out to people to invite their participation?*" However it also allowed us to think formally about how we would get people to participate in the project. We started to talk about how we could create an invitation and attach it to the bottle, like a tag, and how participants' handwriting on the tag could also be used in the final piece. Using jars also—helpfully—limited how the objects could be displayed or repurposed. (Why use mason jars to collect objects if not to display the objects in the jars when the project is complete?) Further, the visual language of a mason jar with an object in it connotes the idea of "collecting" and of examining artefacts. We thought it was important to somehow maintain the authenticity of people's collected objects while also hinting at this language of tagging and collecting.









## METHOD OF PARTICIPATION

By tagging the bottles, we were able to keep track of a bottle's contents and its collector. Because we were both interested in refuse as poetic idea, we decided to ask people to collect "trash" (or what they define as trash) in a public space and bottle it, tell us where they found it (nearest street intersection), and name it. We handed out 100 bottles with tags made out of recycled paper bags.

100 bottles 100 participants 100 places in Charlottesville

## INSTALLATION

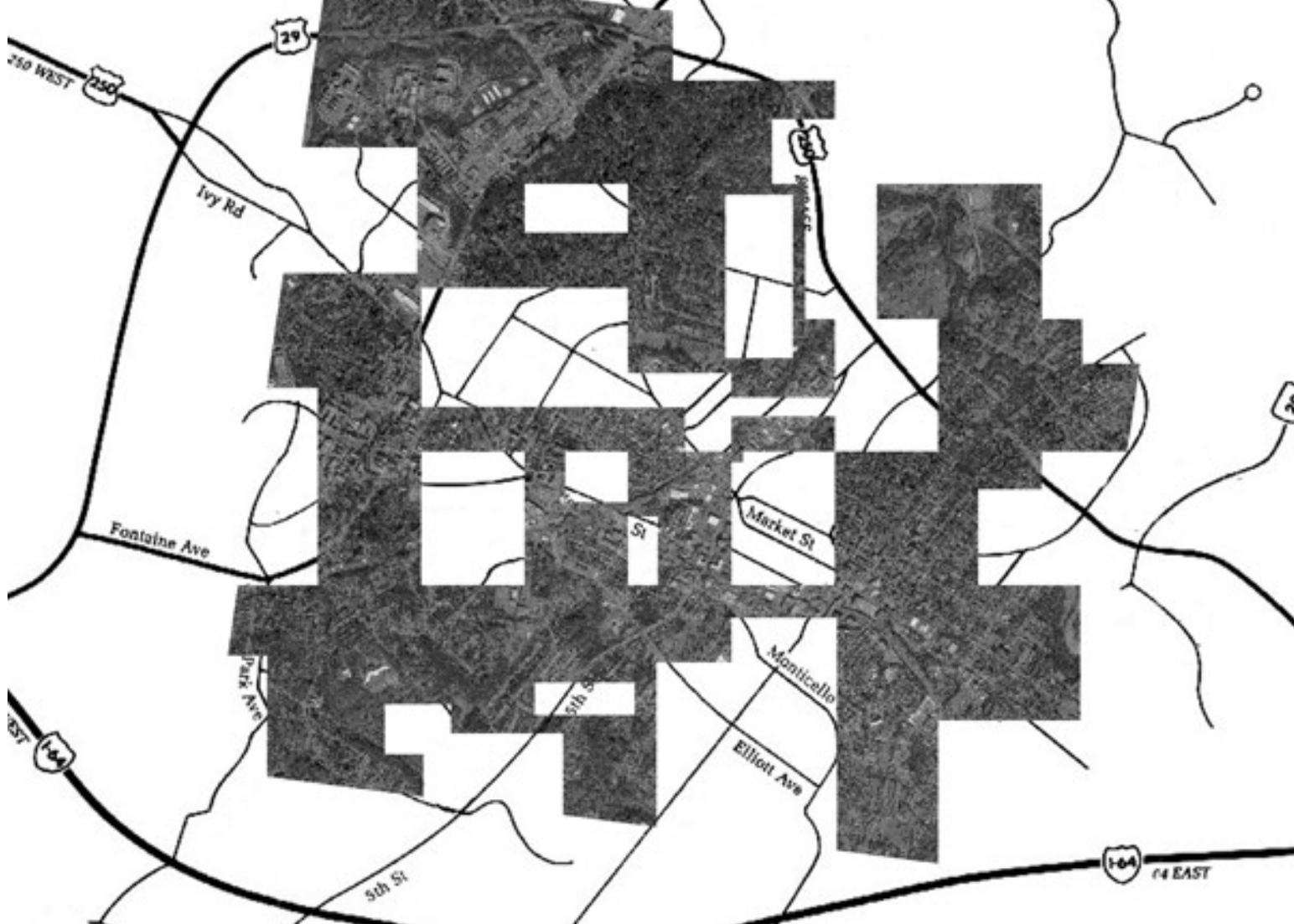
As we collected bottles from participants, Kate and I worked to define how we would display the pieces of trash to the public. This was an organic process—one in which we pitched ideas back and forth in the form of sketches. We knew we wanted the pieces of trash to transcend mere re-presentation. That is, we wanted to avoid a viewer saying, “but isn’t it just a piece of trash?” when they look at the finished product. We wanted viewers to examine the trash with curiosity, making poetic connections between the trash articles and the locations where they were found. Mapping the trash was an important part of achieving this connection.

Kate and I toyed with some modes of mapping. We thought of creating a map—hung vertically on the wall—that had markers for the locations where trash was found. Viewers would see the marker and, hopefully, make a connection with the coresponding bottle of trash lined up on a shelf adjacent to the map. However as an interactive device, this way of engaging with the information felt forced. Would a viewer stand to look at the map and have the patience to move back and forth between the map and the shelves? The interaction seemed unnecessarily complicated.

We wanted the connection between bottles and the locations where they were found to be more direct, yet still affording the viewer an opportunity to interact or engage with the bottles themselves. Moreover, we wanted the bottles to be lit from above so that the trash was highlighted, transformed in some way.

After more sketches and many more meetings, we decided that in order to invite people to “enter into” to the space, we needed to suspend the bottles over a map vertically. This idea would allow the viewer a 360-degree look at the bottles while still creating a locational—albeit slightly more poetic—understanding of where the trash was found. The light cast downward from the bottles would highlight where the trash was found on the map on the floor of the space, with the most popular locations being the most well-lit.

Kate and I then moved into the production stage of the map. We acquired a piece of used Tyvek paper that we used as a substrate for our hand-printed map. The map image is a combination of a line-drawn map and Google Earth aerial images. These images were combined and printed into 100 8.5 x 11 sheets of paper.



Above  
Digital map image used to create hand-printed map



*Below*

Progress images documenting the collaborative creation of the hand-printed map of Charlottesville





Once tiled together to create the map, each paper was transferred to the Tyvek substrate using a gloss medium transfer technique.

Kate and I collaborated fluidly on the map. We worked simultaneously, returning to sand, gloss, and stain portions over the course of a two-week span. This way of working inevitably involved a great deal of trust. We had to discuss how we envisioned the map turning out as a means of avoiding stepping on one another's toes. I would make a suggestion and test it out on an area. Kate would offer her feedback and either approve or disapprove. This back and forth coupled with clear communication about our expectations for the project enabled us to avoid disputes or disappointments. Eventually, we arrived at the point in our collaboration where we were able to empower one another to do certain tasks, knowing that we could trust one another to complete it within the collective vision we had cultivated.

After the map was complete, we began to create a system for hanging the bottles over the map. We envisioned using a tightly-gridded space frame to hang them, however as the map progressed toward completion, we began to discuss more serendipitous ways of hanging. We arrived at the idea to run pieces of twine back and forth (horizontally) across the installation space, mimicking a spider-web. We tied pieces diagonally across the web, weaving pieces of twine over and under other strings. We experimented repeatedly with bottles hanging from the twine in order to achieve the desired 'look' we were both after.

Finally, it came time to install the bottles in the space. Small LED lights were installed underneath the screw-on tops of each mason jar, and the jars were wrapped tightly in a harness of twine to be hung over the map. Using the tags that participants filled out, we suspended the bottles over the location in the city of Charlottesville where the trash was found.

The installation opening took place on Friday, December 5, 2008 and was open to the public. Viewers were invited into the space and were encouraged to walk on the hand-printed map in order to view the bottles in the installation space. We provided separate artist statements so that viewers could more easily engage with the concepts explored through the installation.

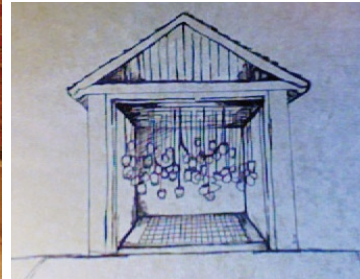


*Far Left*

Testing out modes of suspending jars over the map as well as modes of lighting the jars previous to the opening.

*Left*

Placing the jars in position on the map.



*Bottom*

An early drawing of the installation space depicts the intent of the hanging bottles in relationship to the floor map.

*Right*

Opening night

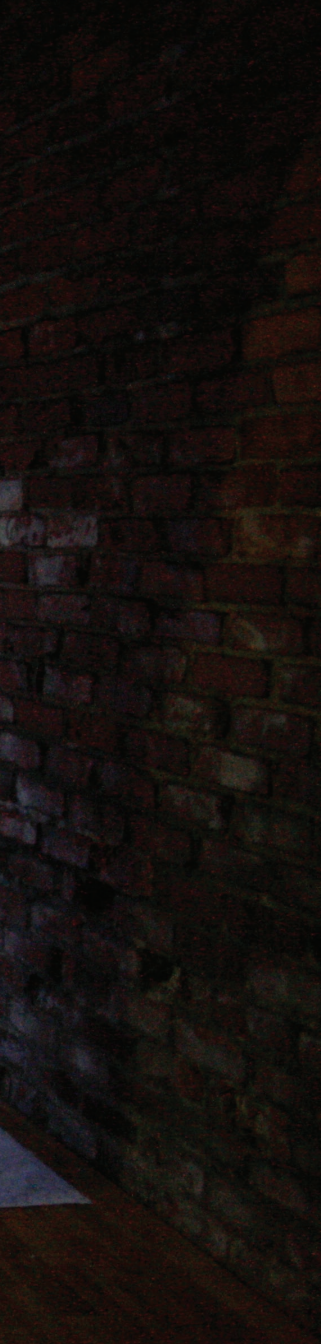












## ARTIST STATEMENT // KATE DAUGHDRILL

The Situationist practice of *dériving* is an attempt to analyze the totality of everyday life through the passive movement through geographical space. To *dérive* is translated as to drift. This project is an investigation into the possibility of collaborative drifting, collecting, and recontextualizing.

**Refuse:** This project is political. This project is about where we go and where we don't go. This project is about walking and driving. It is about the city of Charlottesville and its neighborhoods. It is about what we see and don't see. It is about accumulation. It is about reexamining the spectacles and curiosities of the everyday. It is about the politics of value. It is about awareness.

**Redemption:** This project is spiritual. This project is about low things being lifted up. This project is about being made new again. It is about being renamed and reunderstood in a new context and in a new light.

**Recollection:** This project is historical. This project is about the bringing of memory or attention to the forefront of our minds. It is

about evidence. It is about what we forget and what we remember. It is about seeing the history and humanness of the everyday objects that are so easy to discard and cease to notice.

The Situationist Manifesto claims that continual *dériving* is dangerous to the extent that the individual, having gone too far without defenses, is threatened with explosion, dissolution, dissociation, disintegration. Perhaps we cannot live here, but surely it is a refreshing exploration of how we live, how we see, and what we collect.

## ARTIST STATEMENT // CARISSA HENRIQUES

"...the more Leonia's talent for making new materials excels, the more the rubbish improves in quality, resists time, the elements, fermentations, combustions. A fortress of indestructible leftovers surround Leonia, dominating it on every side, like a chain of mountains.

This is the result: the more Leonia expels goods, the more it accumulates them; the scales of its past are soldered into a cuirass that cannot be removed. As the city is renewed each day, it preserves all of itself in its only definitive form: yesterday's sweepings piled up on the sweepings of the day before yesterday and all of its days and years and decades."

Excerpt from Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino

### Dérive

Changing // alerting // subverting // following // leading  
// exploring // Changing the landscape of relationship, my  
relationships //

### Refuse

Evocative objects // used then discarded // indexes of culture,  
space, travel, addiction, love, failure, need, religion

### Redemption

Re-contextualizing so as to re-examine // looking closer // lifting  
higher // low vs. high

### Recollection

Remembering and forgetting // mapping // mnemonic //  
preservation



## OUTCOME

It is difficult to gauge the success of an art installation, however from my observation of the art opening it appeared that people were actively engaged with the bottles in the space. Throughout the process of working in the installation space—which is located on a busy pedestrian street in downtown Charlottesville—we had opportunities to talk about the project to passers-by. We left the door open while we worked, which allowed us to get feedback from people as they happened upon our installation process. It was interesting to observe how some were immediately drawn into the space, curious about the bottles and their contents. A few people were hesitant about walking inside because they didn't want to walk on the map we had hand printed. However, the fact that people would walk on the work that Kate and I had invested the most effort into was exactly the point. We wanted to uplift the everyday, the mundane, the banal “refuse” so that people would re-examine those articles that are cast aside on the sidewalks. The objects became important indexes to locations in the town: a discarded fried chicken box from a local fast food chain nearby, latex gloves found near UVA hospital, and a “Plan B” pill found near

the college campus. These articles are mysterious, and our intent in lifting them up and lighting them was that people would be equally curious about their path of travel.

From my observation of the opening night, people did engage with the exhibit in the way we had intended. Many people carefully examined the bottles from all angles, and they asked Kate and I about the stories behind certain pieces of interest. Some, I observed, were passively trying to “figure out” the concept for the piece while others just jumped right in and began actively interacting with it. Children were the most uninhibited in this regard, because they seemed to jump into exploring the maze of bottles without hesitation. I didn't need to explain what the exhibit was about, they seemed ready to just explore and play inside the space.

## LESSONS LEARNED

In the collaborative process, one of the most important lessons I learned was that honesty is critical to any collaborative project.

This notion may be self-explanatory. However I am advocating not only honesty about feelings. I found that clearly laying out my intentions—my vested interest in the project—was important to moving forward in the project. With intentions out on the table, Kate and I were able to find a middle ground concerning the aspects of the project that were important to the both of us. Neither of us felt jilted at the end of the project, because we had both worked towards the project in a co-creative way.

During the participatory aspects of the project—where we asked 100 people to submit trash to our installation—I learned how to prescribe participation in an effective way. This process was organic. Kate and I thought through and sketched scenarios, and we tried to anticipate how people would interact with our different methods of participating. Those methods also had to satisfy our concept for the project and provide us the the materials we needed to move forward.

Thus, deciding how people would participate in our project was a long decision-making process that required us to balance multiple

factors in the solution. Kate and I found a method of participation that struck the right balance of prescribed participation (where we directed participants how to participate) and unprescribed participation (where participants could participate however they saw fit). By providing the bottles and the tags with directions, we prescribed how people would participate, but we also limited what people could contribute. Everything else about the participation was left up to the participant's choice. This combination of limitations and freedom allowed people to contribute according to their level of creativity and comfort. Through the process of planning this project, I learned that the method of participation is critical to getting people to participate effectively and that these methods should also satisfy the objectives of your project.

## *Prospect Community Project //*

Working with a Charlottesville, VA community using generative toolkits and participatory design methods

Charlottesville's Abundant Life Ministries (CALM) works in the Prospect and Fifeville community in the city of Charlottesville in order to provide "holistic, whole-family" ministry to community members. In practice, CALM works to provide tutoring and mentorship to children in the community, and to provide outreach, education, and service for adults in all stages of life. Recently, CALM acquired a 3-acre plot of land in the neighborhood in which they work, and they have plans to build a number of buildings on the property that would allow the non-profit to expand programatically.

Before they begin the process of planning the use of the property, CALM wanted feedback from community members about the ways that current programs may or may not be currently meeting the community's needs and ways they can meet potential future needs in the community. This information will enable the non-profit to communicate clearly with architects, designers, and city planners in the future programming and design development stages of the property as well as ensure that the buildings' design meets the real wants, needs, and dreams of community members. In essence, CALM wants to answer the following questions:

*What should be built here (on the land)?*

*What are the current community needs? What are future needs?*

*What hopes or dreams does the community have for the future of their community?*

*How are programs currently helping you and your family?*

*What are new programs that can be provided to better meet the community's needs?*



*Above*

Photograph of the recently acquired plot of land in the Prospect Community owned by Abundant Life Ministries.

Within this framework I began working with CALM to help them gain this information. Previous to my involvement, they had conducted interviews with individual community members and handed out questionnaires, and I endeavored to extend the work they had started by utilizing participatory design methods.

After several meetings with individuals from the non-profit to lay the groundwork for my involvement, we determined that there were immediate opportunities to begin the feedback process. Most immediately, I could initiate an activity with community members during two open houses occurring in October and November. We also discussed the potential for using generative toolkits with different age groups in the community as a means of gaining unique information about their experiences.

As our meetings progressed and I became more familiar with the community—and the role of the non-profit in it—we developed a plan that would allow CALM to gain information from a variety of community members through my engagement with them.

Initially, I would work with the community-at-large during two open house gatherings.

#### **OPEN HOUSE 1 // OPEN HOUSE 2**

Then, I would work with different age groups in the community that interact regularly as a part of mentorship and community-building programs provided by CALM. These workshops would provide an opportunity for concentrated involvement by community members over the course of two hours. During these workshops, I would have the opportunity to facilitate the discussions by introducing generative toolkits.

**WORKSHOP 1:** young adult males

**WORKSHOP 2:** senior citizens

**WORKSHOP 3:** parents

**WORKSHOP 4:** parents + young adult males (combined)

**WORKSHOP 5:** hispanic parents

## OPEN HOUSE 1 // PROSPECT COMMUNITY

My first opportunity to work with the community was at an open house on the new property to which only community members were invited. Through meetings with the non-profit, I was able to anticipate the event's environment and understand who might attend. This information allowed me to design an activity that would enable the people to participate effectively within the limitations of the event.

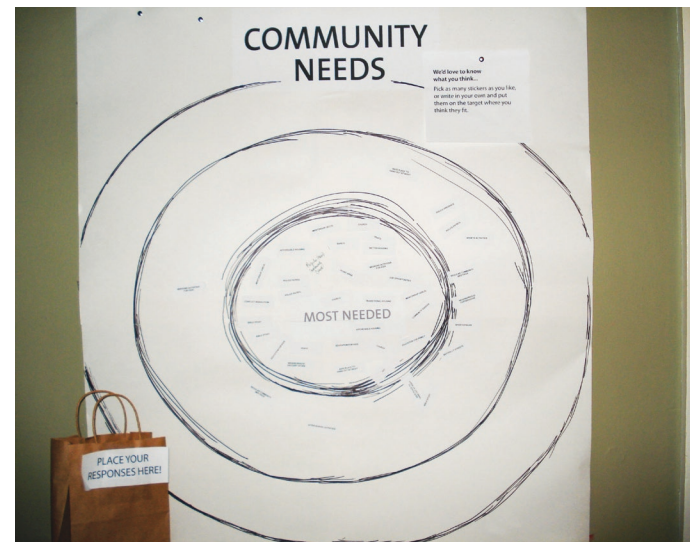
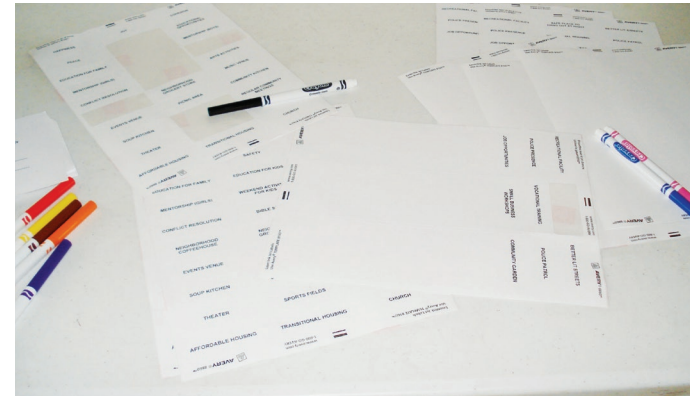
I anticipated that the open house would be casual in format, with individuals meandering in and out of the building. Because of this, I concluded that the activity I oversaw needed to be simple in nature. Presenting a complicated activity to individuals in a social and boisterous environment would discourage people from participating—a scenario I wanted to prevent.

To make the activity simple, I posed a singular question and had straightforward directions for participants.

I asked the question,

**“What is most / least needed in the community?”**

I presented a large posterboard with the words “Community Needs” pasted to the top. On the board, I drew concentric circles in the form of a target, with the center of the target being labelled “most needed.” I provided sheets of words printed on sticky white labels—about thirty to forty words in total. The words were developed over meetings with representatives from CALM, and related to ongoing concerns in the community. I salted the list of “known words” provided by the non-profit with words I developed based on my



limited experience and knowledge with the community. The aim of combining the words was to present a list that might present a balanced and unbiased list of options for participants to choose from. Blank stickers and markers were also provided so that participants could make their own contributions.

Participants were asked to peel and stick the words onto the posterboard according to where they thought they fit best. For example, a participant could note that “community meetings” were most needed, but “playgrounds” were least needed. The word list combined concrete words such as “police presence” and “parks” with words more open to interpretation, such as “peace” and “unity.” Multiple copies of each word were provided to allow each participant to have a complete choice of words from which to choose. This plan also allowed me to make tallies of which words were selected and with what frequency.

## OUTCOME

The simple nature of the activity allowed for a large number of people to participate. I was correct in assuming that the event would gather a random group of people and that the environment would be very social in nature. The design of the activity was thus appropriate for the environment and the perceived level of engagement by participants.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Because of the socially active environment, potential participants needed to be encouraged or prompted to participate. In retrospect, I should have positioned the activity in a more central location, and I should have more actively invited people to participate. I would also have benefitted from assistance from another member of the organization which would have allowed me to seek out additional participants while the activity ensued.

## OPEN HOUSE 2 // COMMUNITY-AT-LARGE

The second open house, open to the Charlottesville community at large, functioned as a “carnival” for community members to celebrate the new property. I was briefed prior to the event that there would be games, food, prizes, and activities for kids and adults taking place during the event. The open house would last for three to four hours, with people mingling at multiple staging-points on the three-acre property.

Knowing that there would be a lot of activity going on during the open house, I designed an activity that was more game-like in nature with the hopes that I would be able to draw in participants. My goal was to create an activity that retained the simple interaction used for the first open house but also enabled participants to build on the concepts in a more visual way.

In the activity, I allowed the participants to engage with a variety of visual elements such as iconic shapes, photographic images, and words in a collage-like manner. Participants were asked to collage these items on an aerial drawing of the property, answering the question,

**“What experiences do you want to have here  
(on the property)?”**

The photographs contained a mixture of denotative and connotative imagery depicting both concrete and metaphorical activities. I included both kinds of imagery to appeal to a wide audience of participants, anticipating that some individuals may respond more to concrete imagery while others might want to



express their experiences using metaphors. I included shapes such as hearts, arrows, trees, squares, rectangles, circles, sunbursts, and people. The words included were a mixture of adjectives, verbs, nouns, and short phrases. My aim in offering mixed elements was that the combination of words, images, and shapes would allow participants to engage with a variety of modes of expression to communicate their desired experiences. All of the elements in the activity were magnetized so that each participant could create their collage on a “clean slate.” Each participant’s composition was photographed for later analysis.





PROSPECT  
PLAY  
together

learn

↑↑ CALM COMMUNITY PROJECT ↑

## OUTCOME

The game-like nature of this activity, within the context of a busy open house, caused it to be misunderstood by the participants. While the activity was designed so that adults could do it in collaboration with their children, it seemed that most adults encouraged their children to interact with the activity while their attention was drawn to other activities. In the absence of parental supervision, I was unable to effectively facilitate the participatory session even with the children who wanted to all work at the same time.

It also seemed that the question I had posed gave the participants difficulty. It seemed to question something to which they were not prepared to respond. From my observation of those who did participate, it appeared that participants seemed to concentrate on grouping “like” objects. For example, many participants grouped two people-shaped magnets together with a heart shape between. Or, participants grouped images of trees with images of a garden or a park. When I inquired about why individuals were making their choices with the shapes and images, most could not say how their choices answered the question about experiences they hoped to have in the future.

*Opposite*

Magnetic collage board with toolkit elements arranged

## LESSONS LEARNED

Based on my experiences with this second activity, I realized that it is best to prepare participants in advance to engage with the issues or questions you are exploring. It is difficult to get participants to respond to a specific question meaningfully if they have not had an opportunity to consider their relationship to the subject matter in advance.

While I perceived the activity to be simple, it was actually rather complex. My question regarding “what experience they would like to have on the property” required participants to consider too many factors at once: their current experience; how it could be better in the future; what activities they like to do now; what activities they might like to do more of in the future; and so on. In retrospect, I should have framed the activity around a more concrete question that relates to current experience rather than future experience.

I also realized the necessity of setting up the activity beforehand—preferably in the actual environment where it will be facilitated—and pre-flight it with friends or colleagues. This would make it possible to gauge what aspects of the activity or the facilitation of it might be confusing for participants. Doing this in advance would have allowed me to anticipate potential distractions, and to amend potentially confusing aspects of how the activity was presented.

## WORKSHOPS

After the two open house activities, I worked with community members through a series of two-hour workshops. The goal of these workshops was to encourage concentrated involvement by community members in the pre-design stage and allow CALM to better understand the community's current and future needs. The workshops targeted a variety of age groups with whom CALM currently works: senior citizens, young adult males, and parents of children who utilize their after school tutoring program. By getting feedback from a diverse population, the non-profit would be able to gain a varied spectrum of information.

## EMOTIONAL TOOLKITS

I designed the interaction in the workshops around the completion of a visual emotional toolkit.<sup>15</sup> Emotional toolkits allow a design researcher to understand people's stories and dreams through the creation of collages or diaries.<sup>16</sup> The use of this form of toolkit was particularly relevant to the type of information that I sought from community members; my goal was to inspire community members to share stories about their current experiences in the community and to facilitate dreaming about the future of the community together.

### *Opposite*

Toolkit components

### **The toolkit I developed consisted of the following:**

lists of single words:	nouns, verbs, and adjectives printed on white sticky labels
photographic images:	a mixture of connotative and denotative imagery
iconic shapes:	starbursts, circles, rectangular frames, squiggles, arrows, people
word phrases:	"cut out" clippings of words and phrases from magazines
collage materials:	markers, construction paper, glue, tape, scissors, white posterboard

<sup>15</sup> Sanders, "From User-Centered," 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.





community

distinct

think

ownership

home

natural

need

job

group

process

Utilisez le gabarit 8160™

Utilisez le gabarit 8160™

AVERY® 8860™

GIVE JOY  
GET JOY

begins with a smile...

digital changes everything

SHAKE  
THINGS UP

playing  
games

Be Objective.

STUDY HARD,  
PLAY HARD.

TAKE THE ROAD  
LESS TRAVEL

Think big

THAT

THE FREEDOM TO BE YOURSELF

Now the



Selecting the toolkit components was a challenge that required a great deal of feedback from members of the non-profit. To a certain extent, my limited experience with and understanding of the community and its issues allowed me to have an unbiased perspective on the toolkit. As someone free of vested interest in the project, I was less likely to prejudice the toolkit's use through the selection of images and words. However, it was still necessary to temper my development of the toolkit with outside feedback. I presented drafts of the toolkit to individuals who worked for the non-profit and had them respond critically to its contents. It was important to me in the development process to present a balance of positive and negative imagery so as to allow participants the option to voice negative experiences.

## WORKBOOKS AS PRIMERS

Because of my experience with the second open house activity, I was aware of the need to prime potential participants before asking them to engage with a guided activity. After a discussion with Liz Sanders, I learned that I could dispense workbooks to the invited individuals prior to the day of the workshop as a means of preparing them to think through the issues. I learned that the contents of the workbook needed to be catered to elicit the kind of information that would be meaningful to the overall project. Also, by collecting the workbooks prior to first meeting with the group, I was able to gain a better understanding of how the activity will engage the participants. The timing of the workbooks is also critical. They had to be handed out early enough to allow participants to fill them out, but not so far in advance that participants would forget what they had written.

After discussions with Liz Sanders and with CALM about the workbook, I decided to frame its contents around the title, "My Community Experience." To introduce the topic, I asked questions in the workbook that relate to concrete realities in people's day-to-day lives, such as:

*List some of your favorite things to do. Which one is your favorite? Why?*

*If you had free time, what activity would you do more of?*

*What are some activities that you would like to do that you don't do now?*

*Why don't you do those activities now?*



*What are some activities or skills that you would like to improve or learn how to do?*

*Who is in your community?  
(circle words in a list or write in a blank)*

*What is your favorite place in Charlottesville?  
Why is this your favorite place?*

*Do you like your neighborhood? Why or why not?*

I provided an opportunity for participants to draw a map of where they live and location(s) where they spend the most time during the work week. On the last page of the workbook, I asked participants to select pictures from a matrix that asked (1) “best describe how you feel about your community right now,” and (2) “best describes how you want your community to be in the future.” I presented two identical image groups, so only the question was different. I also provided a space for individuals to explain their response.

I asked individuals from the non-profit to hand out the workbooks to potential participants at least one week prior to the date of the workshop, and I collected and reviewed the completed workbooks a few days prior to the meeting.

**ABOUT MY COMMUNITY**

**Who is in your community?**  
(Circle all that apply or write your own in the blanks)

next-door neighbors	neighbors on my street
family	everyone in my neighborhood
friends	co-workers
close friends	friends online
people from school	_____
people from church	_____
extra-curricular group	_____

**What is your favorite place in Charlottesville?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Why is this place your favorite?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Do you like your neighborhood?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Why or why not?**

\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

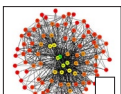

\_\_\_\_\_



4

**ABOUT MY COMMUNITY (continued)**

**Select the picture that best describes how you want your community to be *in the future*.**  
(You may select more than one)

**Why did you choose these pictures / this picture?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7

Above  
Pages from the workbook.

## WORKSHOP 1 // YOUNG ADULT MALES

The first workshop I facilitated was with young adult males who met together regularly as a part of a mentorship program with CALM. The group was given workbooks to fill out one week in advance of the meeting. After receiving back the workbooks and looking them over, I gained helpful information about how to proceed. For example, many individuals selected the same imagery on the photo-matrix page: a picture of a web-like network and a picture of children playing tug-of-war. It was apparent from their explanations that they were very aware of confusion and conflict in their community.

The information from the workbooks prompted me to facilitate a discussion at the beginning of the session. This discussion served as an ice breaker for the group. At the start, I handed back the workbooks to the participants and asked them to share their answers to the last two pages that featured the image matrix questions. By having them explain why they chose certain images, I was able to prompt an active discussion about their current community experience. This activity allowed the group to connect with one another about the issues they shared, and the group elaborated on how those issues effect their experiences in their community. The discussion portion of the workshop lasted for approximately 45 minutes, at which point I initiated the toolkit collage activity.

### Note [1]

Asking people to express their current experiences before moving to future experiences is a necessary progression to consider when facilitating participatory activities.

Because I had six participants present—too many to work on one collage together—I broke the group into two smaller groups. I handed each group a toolkit, a piece of white posterboard, tape, scissors, glue, and markers. I instructed the groups to use whatever parts of toolkit they wanted to use in order to create a collage about their “future community experience.” [1]

After providing approximately 30 minutes for the groups to create their collages, I asked the groups to stop working and prepare to present their collages to the group. Through the presentations, I was able to learn more about the group’s experiences and dreams as they elaborated on the imagery in the collage. [2] After the groups presented, I instigated a short exit-discussion.

## OUTCOME

The workbooks provided valuable information that adequately prepared me to design and facilitate the workshop. The group was most engaged in the discussion portion of the workshop, however the collage activity was not met with the same enthusiasm. From my observation, it seemed that the group felt very comfortable verbalizing their experiences and the issues that related to their experience. In many ways, the collages of the future experience mirrored the picture that the group described verbally for their present community experience. This observation caused me to question whether the participants did dream of a changed future. Did they believe that change was possible?

## LESSONS LEARNED

Delivering the workbooks in advance worked very well, and I recommend initiating a priming activity before a concentrated participatory session, such as a workshop. Reviewing parts of the workbook at the beginning the session was also helpful, because it allowed everyone to be on the “same page” about the subject matter. It was also helpful have participants discuss their current experience in the community before moving into using a generative tool, such as a toolkit, to express future experience.

## Note [2]

.....

This was an important step in the process. According to Liz Sanders' research, it is not only the creation of the collage as an artifact that is important in understanding people's wants and needs, it also important to understand the process and thinking behind the aesthetic choices from the point of view of the creator.<sup>17</sup> Having people articulate those choices verbally enables a facilitator to understand explicitly people's wants and needs.

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<sup>17</sup> Sanders, “From User-Centered,” 5.



Above  
Collage artifacts created during Workshop 1



Above  
4 x 6 cards that were planned for use during Workshop 2

## WORKSHOP 2 // SENIOR CITIZENS

My second workshop was with senior citizen community members, and in this case, I decided to digress from the toolkit approach. I shifted my approach, because I perceived that the elderly group would not want to engage with an activity that required them to cut out shapes and glue them to pieces of posterboard. More importantly, I felt that it might be more appropriate to hold a discussion that allowed them to provide some historical context for the community. Most of the senior citizens had lived in the area for about thirty years, so getting their input regarding how the community has changed over that span of time would provide some valuable background information for the non-profit.

I framed the activity around a storytelling discussion. In order to prompt the telling of stories, I created a deck of ten 4 x 6 inch cards depicting a mix of historical and current pictures of the city of Charlottesville. I specifically selected historical images from the 1960's and the 1970's with the hope that these would trigger a memory or a story for some of the participants. I planned to set the pictures out on a table, ask the participants to look over the pictures, and select any picture that sparked their memory of a story they want to tell the rest of the group.

## OUTCOME

When the workshop took place, I found that the senior citizens were ready to launch into a discussion without the use of the cards. The group discussed what the community used to be like both physically and experientially when they first lived there. Many

recalled the ways it had changed for the worse, and they discussed specific problems that characterized their current community experience. The group was extremely talkative and actively engaged in the discussion, which lasted over two hours.

## LESSONS LEARNED

I learned—perhaps most aptly during this workshop—the importance of being flexible. As a facilitator, you never know how people will react when they arrive. Fortunately, in preparation for the workshop, I developed a list of potential discussion questions. I was able to use some of these questions to spark conversation after the group had exhausted other topics. This list was very helpful as a frame of reference and I would recommend developing question lists to have on hand for all workshops, even ones that do not focus specifically on storytelling.



### WORKSHOP 3 // PARENTS

For this workshop, I handed out workbooks similar to those used in Workshop 1. The participants were parents whose children took part in the afterschool tutoring program offered by the non-profit. After each parent had filled out the workbook, I was able to use their answers to prepare for the upcoming session. Since starting with discussion in the previous workshop had worked well, I decided to use the same plan for the workshop with the parents.

After the discussion, I asked each parent to create a collage using the articles from the toolkit. I asked every person to create a collage, because there were only four adults present and everyone seemed to be independently and actively engaged. After approximately 30 minutes, I asked them to present their finished collages to the rest of the group.

### OUTCOME

It was interesting to observe how each person handled the contents of the toolkit. One individual used almost every single article, clustering the words together and then overlapping the images. Many recalled their reasons for selecting certain images over others, which provided extremely helpful feedback regarding the toolkit's imagery.

The parents seemed to not only enjoy the opportunity to voice their concerns but also the chance spend time together. The group was actively engaged in the discussion—so much so that it was difficult to get them to stop talking in order to do the collage activity. As they were discussing their current community experience, I

observed continuity between the issues brought up in the previous workshop. Lastly, I observed that the parents group was generally more concerned with the “future experience” than the young adult group. Together, they painted a more positive future.

### LESSONS LEARNED

I learned that the motivation and extroversion of group members is a big factor when trying to instigate involvement from participants. In the case of the parents group, the group dynamic was unplanned. A facilitator cannot accurately plan ahead to have extroverts in their group, nor can they anticipate how motivated potential participants may be. However, as a general rule of thumb, I found that parents have a lot to say when it comes to dreaming about a possible future, potentially because of their desire to see their children living happily in the years ahead.

## WORKSHOP 4 // PARENTS + YOUNG ADULT MALES

As a means of combining the feedback received from the previous groups, I designed a workshop that would combine the groups from Workshop 1 and 3 into one session. Both groups had expressed similar feelings and experiences relating to their community, so I wanted to give the groups an opportunity to come together and realize those similarities as well as dream about the future together.

I decided not to use toolkits again in this activity since it might seem repetitive to those who had already used them in the earlier sessions. My plan involved the following:

- 1] Have each group separately go over the issues they discussed in the previous workshop as a “recap”
- 2] Ask each group to present their findings and collage artifacts to the other group
- 3] Ask the combined group to discuss the similarities and differences between what they discussed in the separate sessions
- 4] Ask the group to list out key issues in their community
- 5] Order the issues from “most” to “least” important
- 6] Take the two most important issues, and create a list of the factors that they believe relate or feed into those issues.
- 7] Solicit ideas for possible solutions

I planned to hand out the collage artifacts to each group at the beginning of the workshop as a means of stimulating their

discussion amongst themselves and reminding them of the activities completed in the previous workshops. I planned to use a large white pad of paper and markers to jot down people's ideas for steps 3–4. In order to brainstorm ideas as a group for steps 5–7, I planned to give each person a stack of sticky notes on which to write their response.

I envisioned asking participants to write their issues (step 4) on the sticky notes and to stick their responses to the large pad of paper. Then, I would ask participants to number the sticky notes according to importance (step 5). The sticky notes would provide a way for the group to be physically involved with the brainstorming activity, and it would allow the group to move their answers around on the large pad of paper. For step 6, I planned for participants to also use the sticky notes to create a web-like “map” of interconnected issues.

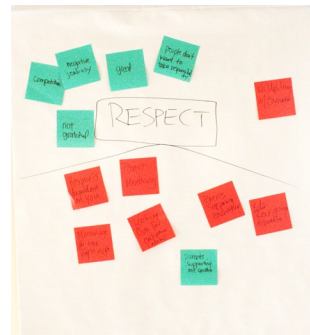
My aim was to create an active dialogue session that culminated in a conceptual map. I perceived that this way of interacting would provide a more “roll up your sleeves” experience for participants because of the brainstorming focus of the activity. Since the groups had met and discussed the issues separately beforehand, I felt the group would be prepared to engage in this kind activity.

## OUTCOME

Overall, the activity felt very forced. There were not an equal number of people present at the workshop from each group. There were many more young adult males present than there

## LESSONS LEARNED

I also learned that timing is important when trying to create a progression from one workshop to the next. In retrospect, I should have facilitated this workshop closer to the previous workshops. I think too much time had passed between when both groups met with me the first time, so meeting again was almost like starting over.



*Above, Left*  
Brainstorming sheets produced  
during Workshop 4

## WORKSHOP 5 // HISPANIC PARENTS

The final workshop I facilitated involved Spanish-speaking parents of children involved in afterschool and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) tutoring programs offered by CALM. The organization wanted to learn more about the hispanic community, because language barriers and the transient nature of the community have not enabled them to gain much information.

To prepare for the workshop, I had the workbook translated into Spanish and dispensed to the participants. With the help of the Hispanic Adult Literacy Coordinator at CALM, I secured several volunteers to act as helpers and translators. Upon meeting with the Coordinator after the workbooks were sent out, I was informed that things were not working out as I had planned. The Coordinator reported that the participants were confused as to why I wanted the workbook filled out. This confusion caused the Coordinator to have to provide additional context for the workbook questions and even go through the workbook page by page with some. Further, the Coordinator reported that most participants were confused by the image matrix section of the book.

I reviewed the completed workbooks to try to understand why there was a problem. After looking through the image matrix pages, I found that most people selected denotative imagery and interpreted the images literally. Almost no one selected the metaphorical images. Without additional background information about the reasons behind their image choices and the other potential problems with the workbook, I moved ahead with the planning of the workshop. I utilized the workbooks and the

knowledge I had gained from the Coordinator to adjust the design of the toolkit activity.

I realized that facilitating the exact same activity that I had with the other groups was not a suitable approach. With the other groups, I had asked people to use a large toolkit with words, images, and shapes to create a collage about their “future experience.” However, after looking at the workbook responses for Workshop 5, I realized that they provided very little information about the group’s current experiences. It seemed more appropriate to dwell more on current, rather than future, experience..

I focused the workshop on trying to understand what activities inform people’s daily experience. Instead of asking participants to project onto the tools their *feelings* about experiences, I planned an activity that would require participants to *organize* images to present a flow of information. I framed the activity around two questions:

**“What does your average day look like?” and “What would your perfect day look like?”**

I planned to ask participants to create one map for each question that chronicles their average day and that depicts their ideal or perfect day. Each poster had its own separate toolkit. The toolkit contained only pictures and shapes, but no words. I carefully selected images for each toolkit (one toolkit for “average day” and one toolkit for “perfect day”) that provided a range of denotative images. I included a range of pictures of people doing activities

such as reading, working, studying, playing outside, etcetera. On the posterboard, I affixed the words, “morning,” “afternoon,” and “evening” as well as the title for the activity in Spanish. I drew a timeline horizontally across the board to provide a guide for mapping.

## OUTCOME

The activity was very successful in that the group was able to complete it, and it afforded an opportunity for them to share their experiences with one another. I started out the workshop by going through the workbooks, as I had in previous workshops. I observed that participants were generally more comfortable expressing their feelings and thoughts verbally than was evident in the workbooks. In the workbooks the explanations were sparse and abbreviated, however the discussion was very animated. I relied on a group of three translators—including the Hispanic Adult Literacy Coordinator—to relay what people were saying during the workshop. The discussion was very active and the group thoroughly covered the topic “what activities they do on a normal day.” Because they covered this topic, it would have been redundant to ask the group to create a map about their average day as I had planned. I skipped that part of the activity, and instead I asked the group to create a collage about “un dia perfecto”—their perfect day. I broke the group of six people into two groups for the activity.



*Above, Opposite*

Collage artifacts created during Workshop 5





After they finished working, I asked the two groups to present their maps. After they explained their maps, I asked them about ways that they can be helped further by the non-profit in the areas in which they were currently having difficulty. The discussion and the mapping activity provided a wealth of information to consider about the hispanic community's wants and needs.

## LESSONS LEARNED

I exercised the lesson I learned in Workshop 2 about being flexible. Different groups bring to bear new challenges and design problems for a facilitator to consider when designing an activity. By reflecting on the information that I was given about the group, I was able to adapt the toolkit activity in a way that was tailored to the perceived needs of the group. In this case, my perceptions were accurate and the change was successful. So, it is important as a facilitator to take time to reflect upon the potential challenges of each workshop and to—as much as possible—prepare to meet those challenges through the design of an activity.

Lastly, I learned that the level of engagement by a group with an activity is sometimes left to a matter of group dynamics. In the case of Workshop 5, the presence of two very extroverted and animated individuals encouraged others to also voice their opinions. By putting these extroverted individuals into two separate groups for the mapping activity, I was able to ensure that both groups were balanced. However, had these two individuals been unable to attend the workshop, I think the dynamic and energy of the group might not have been as high.

## *Art Klatch* // Collaboratively-authored arts blog

Art Klatch was created as a collaboratively-authored blog focusing on community, collaboration, and conversation about contemporary art and its relevant critical discourse. Started in 2009, the blog is a brainchild of five Charlottesville, VA-based artists and art critics. A klatch is a conversation or a social gathering had over coffee, so the title connotes the idea of talking about art in a casual, social manner. We first started gathering (over coffee) to talk about our desire to see the local arts community be more involved in an ongoing, public dialogue. We observed that many of us would go to local arts events and openings, but afterwards we never seemed to talk about the issues that the artist raised. There did not seem to be a local “voice” for ongoing critical discussion about visual art.

Out of these conversations, we decided to start a blog to facilitate an ongoing arts discussion. The group voted on the name, and we began moving forward with our ideas for the blog. We talked about the other websites we liked and what about their design we wanted to emulate. Wanting to prevent a “design-by-committee” process, I volunteered for the role of designer. I stepped into this role knowing that the other members of the group would play the role of both my collaborators and my clients. I would be the person who would pitch ideas for their approval, and they could offer their designs for the website as well. However as the person who had the knowledge about blogging technology, I would have control over the production and administration of the website.

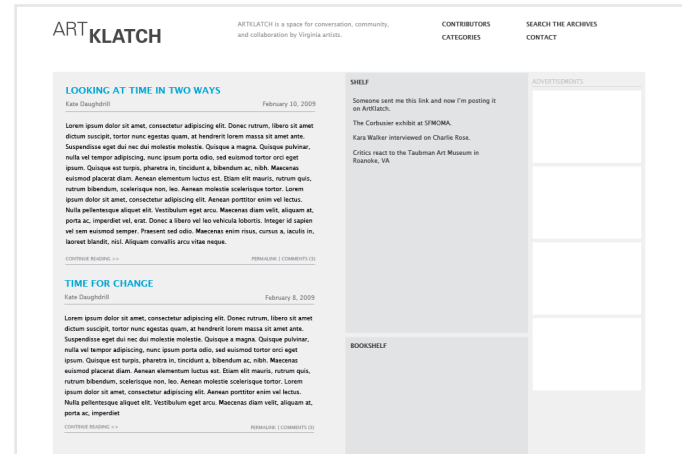
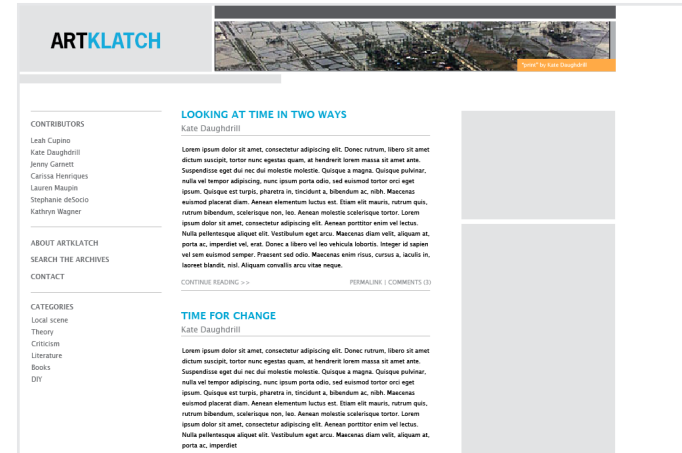
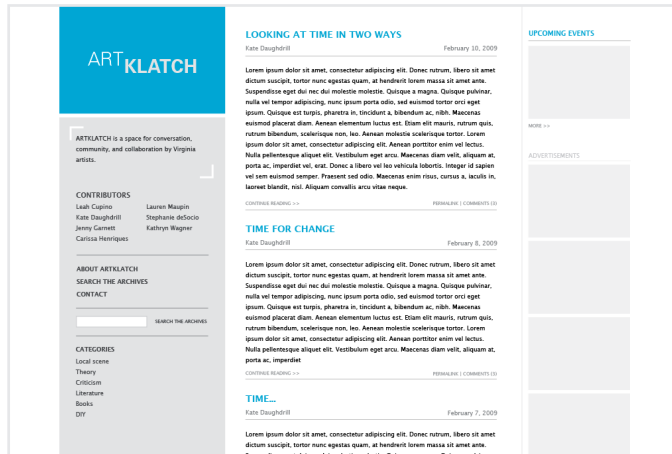
## DESIGN PROCESS

The process of designing the site and organizing its content was organic. I presented ideas for the group's approval, which spurred discussions about aspects of the design that they liked or did not like. I was able to learn the group's opinion on aspects of blogging technology and the way that they envisioned the site functioning. It was helpful to present visuals for these conversations, because the group had something to respond to and offer their criticism.

Once I presented a draft of the design that the group approved, I moved forward with developing the site.

### Right and Below

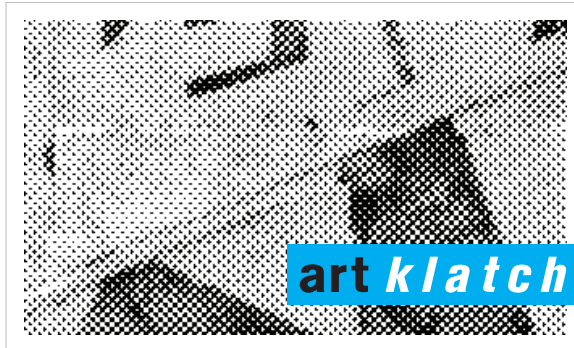
Site design concepts depicting different layouts for the blog as well as explorations of the logo for Art Klatch.



## CURRENT DESIGN



Final logo design for Art Klatch.



Logo in use in the blog header. The background image can change seasonally to reflect the authors' collective interest or showcase aspects of the authors' personal work.

## MAIN CONTENT AREA

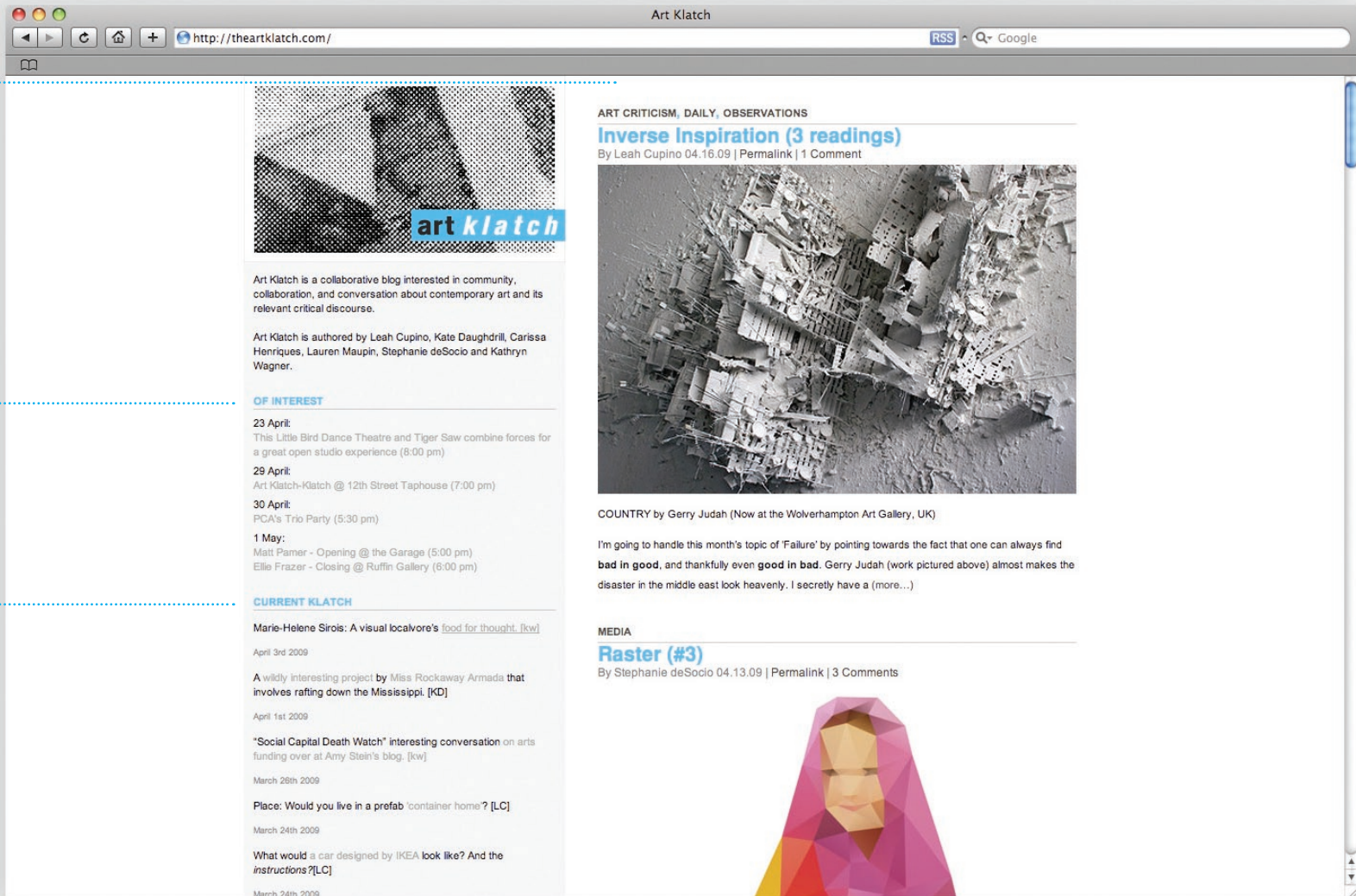
When authors post entries to the blog, it is put into the main content area which is 400 pixels wide. Images are inserted into posts first as a visual “hook” for the reader. The authors take turns writing posts based on a list of monthly topics, such as: place, time, fetish and devotion, failure, etc. The topics are meant to provide inspiration for the authors as well as create some cohesion amongst the posts. However, the author can interpret the topic loosely according to their individual interests.

## OF INTEREST

Sideblog that acts as a calendar. When authors select the category “Events,” posts are put into the sidebar. The events are typically local or regional and relate to the authors' interests.

## CURRENT KLATCH

A second sideblog that is designed to function like a second content area. Because all of the authors agreed that we would not be able to post long entries every day, we wanted another means of keeping the content regularly updated. “Current Klatch” posts are abbreviated observations with links to things of interest on the web. The title “Current Klatch” can be construed to mean, “what we’re talking about now.”







# CONCLUSION

## EVALUATION

In many ways, I feel like my study of participation has only just begun. As is the case with any research, the more you learn about a subject matter, the more you realize just how much you don't know. I feel this exact sense of confusion. I now realize—after two years of graduate school and countless hours of reading, writing, and thinking about participation—just how much I don't know. This is by no means the conclusion of my studies.

I started out my interest in participation because of my desire to see social change occur through the work of the designer. I observed a world littered with products of design, many of which did not serve real human need. It seemed that if only designers could spend their time learning about that need—by including users in the design process—this involvement could somehow help to alleviate the problem.

I became involved in researching this process of participation and its various modes through collaboration and co-creation. I explored a variety of case studies that allowed me to investigate these modes: through toolkits and workshops, art installations, and blogging technologies. All of these cases brought to bear new concerns

and challenges for me as a designer, artist, facilitator, and communicator to consider. They provided different cross-sections of this thing called participation, creating new opportunities for me to explore my interest and hone my skills.

Ultimately, I have realized that the mode of participation is completely dictated by the audience and the “design problem” or the initial question being pursued:

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For example, I had to heavily prescribe the method of collaboration with the creation of four sound collage works. The initial problem presented many challenges: a short turn-around time, large audio files, and multiple simultaneous responses. Because I was working with another designer—rather than a non-designer—I was able to impose a structure for our participation that appropriately addressed our shared skill level and technological proficiency and provided order for the responses.

Using toolkits and similar participatory methods was an extremely useful way to engender the feedback and involvement of the Prospect Community. The value in using the toolkits in a workshop format was not only in the information they provided but also the opportunity for community members to get together, face to face, and talk about issues together. I saw the incredible value in this very simple method: getting people together. Good things happen when people are given the opportunity to talk, share stories, and to laugh together—to dream together about their community and what it might be. This togetherness allowed individuals to feel a sense of resonance with one another as they realized that they were not alone in their experiences. As a facilitator, i was able to empathize with their concerns because they were given the opportunity to present those concerns to me. The toolkits acted as a catalyst for this important communication process.

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The methods used for the Dérive project, likewise, were appropriate for the challenges and concerns of the installation process. By prescribing aspects of the participation, we allowed those people who felt more comfortable “breaking the rules” to do so, while the rule-followers submitted exactly what we asked. We were pleasantly surprised throughout the participatory process of the installation as people contributed, and people’s participation made the project infinitely more powerful as a collective whole. Participants were generally excited to be involved in the artistic process, and I observed participants’ sense of ownership over the objects they found once the exhibit was installed. While Kate and I recontextualized the objects, we retained enough of the individual’s original contribution that participants’ voice was maintained in the final form of the installation.

With Art Klatch, the use of blogging technology appropriately met the desire to communicate with a broad local audience in an ongoing and sustained manner. The technology itself prescribes—and limits—the way people can contribute and participate in the conversation. However, by combining the blog with actual events, such as “happy hour” meetings, the online community is extended to face to face interaction and conversation. The collaborative nature of the blog allows the content to be diverse, as different authors bring to bear very different interests, concerns, and skills. This diversity helps the blog’s content to reach more people, as each author represents a different subset of the visual arts community.



## EVALUATING AUDIENCE

The mode of participation is heavily dictated by who you are working with. As a designer working with another designer or artist, I have observed that the participation can be more fluid and less prescribed. At some point in the creative process, the designer has to temporarily step into the role of “manager” to communicate the direction and provide structure for the collaboration. In the case of my collaboration with Jason Dilworth, the challenges surrounding the project required heightened organization, however, when working with Kate Daughdrill, our collaboration required less management.

When working with non-designers, I have observed that the role of the designer becomes less important. The designer has to step into the role of “facilitator” as a means of helping other people to express themselves. This role entails organizing the flow of a participatory activity as well as being sensitive to the needs of the group with whom you are working. For the extent of the participatory session, this role does not change.

Working with both groups—designers and non-designers—require the role of the designer to shift. This shift is more or less drastic depending on the audience and the problem at hand. However, it is necessary as a means of opening up the design process to the participation of any outsider.

**As a way of evaluating my investigations, I am returning to the initial questions I sought to answer with this project:**

- 1 How are toolkits used in practice?**
- 2 How might toolkits be expanded or adapted to meet different project criteria?**
- 3 What are methods and technologies that graphic designers can use to encourage participation?**
- 4 What are the barriers to participation?**

## QUESTIONS 1+2 //

I addressed questions 1 and 2 through my use of toolkits with the Prospect Community Project. By using and adapting toolkits according to each opportunity to engage with community members, I became more familiar with this participatory method. I had the opportunity to create and adapt the toolkit by changing the contents of the toolkit as well as the form. I used a version of a toolkit to create a magnetized collage activity, and I heavily adapted the contents of a toolkit for a mapping activity. Through adapting the toolkit, I learned the importance of pre-flighting the activity beforehand in order to ensure its usefulness.

## QUESTION 3 //

My exploration of other participatory methods—through the use of a group word-collage, a participatory art installation, and through blogging technology—investigates other forms and means of getting non-designers involved in a design process. However, most importantly, I have realized that the first step to encouraging participation is merely considering how participation relates to a certain project. Is it relevant? This is a particularly apt question for the graphic designer, because in many cases participation isn't relevant. If we are designing a poster for a client, it may not make sense to try to involve non-designers in the process. Moreover, a client may not pay for this sort of investigation. But in projects where participation *is* relevant, considering *how* it is relevant is the first step toward developing methods and means.

## QUESTION 4 //

The barriers to participation are significant. From my investigations, I observed that incentive is a serious factor in getting people to participate. It seemed that if the task or activity I introduced was very simple (requiring little effort outside of the realm of “normal” activity for an individual) people were more likely to engage with it. However, if the activity required individuals to step outside of their “normal” activities—say, for a special meeting or to collect trash—then some incentive needed to be offered. Or, they needed to view the opportunity you were presenting to participate to be a worthwhile investment of their effort and time.

Another barrier to participation is preparedness. In order for people to contribute meaningfully to an activity or an endeavor, they need to know who, what, why, and how. They have to have an understanding of how their participation fits in to the “big picture” of a project. This requires a great deal of forethought on the part of the designer / facilitator about exactly how to communicate their aims. This challenge becomes more murky in the case of a collaborative art project, as you do not want to prohibit non-artists from contributing with the language you use to describe the project. The method of participation has to be obvious and straightforward, or else people need a primer (such as a workbook) to prepare for their participation in a project.



# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

With participation, to learn new directions, means, and methods, it is best to just jump in and try things out. In this spirit, I endeavor to continue my investigations into generative tools, such as toolkits, exploring new ways that they can be applied. Each new design problem or new question provides a unique opportunity for a participatory method to be applied. Because of this nature, the future holds unlimited opportunities to explore new modes of participation.

Graphic designers are uniquely positioned to explore new avenues of collective visual communication. I hope to extend my skills and knowledge of graphic design tools into the development and adaptation of visual toolkits as a means of finding new ways to facilitate people's self-expression.

I see future directions in my investigation in relation to a poetic application of participation. The domain of relational aesthetics<sup>18</sup> and critical design<sup>19</sup> has not been addressed with my investigations, and I am interested in exploring these areas as they relate to graphic design tools and methods and to collective creativity.

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18 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002), 14.

19 Anthony Dunne, Preface to the 2005 edition, *Hertzian Tales: Electronic Products, Aesthetic Experience, and Critical Design*, by Anthony Dunne (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), xiii.



## FURTHER DIRECTIONS

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### *Object Memory* // Participatory Memory Project

Object Memory is a project that, at the time of writing this thesis, is still being implemented. The focus of the project is to create a blog-like repository for individuals to submit memories that are triggered by specific objects. Object Memory was born out of my interest in collective memory, a continuation of my studies in a workshop during Spring of 2008. I am interested in combining blogging technologies with participatory methods, such as toolkits, because both provide opportunities for people to express their creativity.

At the site, viewers are invited to submit their memories in any media they prefer: audio, audio/visual, two-dimensional collage, scrapbook page, or simply through a picture and a written story. The reason behind this “open submittal” is that I want to provide an opportunity for any and all individuals to participate however they feel comfortable. I want to be careful not to prescribe too heavily how people interpret and share their memories, because memory is precious and specific. For individuals more comfortable with audio media, they can submit an audio story. Some individuals may feel more comfortable creating a two-dimensional collage about their memory.

While collage-making can be completed without aid, for those who may want a little help getting started on their collages, I will provide two versions of a toolkit. One version will be a “basic toolkit” containing outlines of layouts for images and text for use as guides. A second version, called, “toolkit extras” will include shape elements that a user can download, cut, and paste into their collage. For two-dimensional creations, such as collages, I ask individuals to scan and email their memory submittals.

The goal of the site is that it will serve as an ongoing repository for memories and as such will be a place for sharing stories collectively. My vision for the site is that as stories collect, viewers will find commonality among the stories. For example, I could read about someone’s memory of their mother’s apron, and by reading the story my memory is triggered by my own memories about the same subject matter. Memory is nebulous and difficult to capture, however I hope that by sharing stories, a collective consciousness develops.

The home page will provide a description of the project and an invitation to participate.

See image on the opposite page.

Main content area will have a long scroll and will be archived by month and indexed by category.

A sideblog will provide links to other memory-related projects and links of interest.

# OBJECT MEMORY

A PARTICIPATORY MEMORY PROJECT

This project explores the stories of how specific memories can be evoked through objects. Sometimes these objects are seemingly meaningless, yet for you and I they may hold immense importance. They are cherished.

*Please tell me a story about a specific object that you have in your possession that evokes a memory for you.*

The memory should be distinct and recallable—one that almost “pops” into your head when you look at the object.

All media formats are accepted. You can also use one of the memory toolkits I’ve provided below.

## MEMORIES ▼

MEMORY, SCRAPBOOKS

### MY BLUE SHOES by Carissa Henriques

POSTED 3.12.09 BY CARISSA



(MORE...)

COMMENTS (2)

MEMORY, SCRAPBOOKS

### SAND FROM THE BEACH by John Smith

POSTED 3.12.09 BY CARISSA

## HOW TO SUBMIT A MEMORY ►

### CATEGORIES

MEMORY	MEMORY	MEMORY
FORGETTING	FORGETTING	FORGETTING
OBJECTS	OBJECTS	OBJECTS
SCRAPBOOK	SCRAPBOOK	SCRAPBOOK

### SIDEBLOG

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3.20.2009

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3.20.2009

SIDEBLOG ARCHIVES

# OBJECT MEMORY

A PARTICIPATORY MEMORY PROJECT

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*Please tell me a story about a specific object that you have in your possession that evokes a memory for you.*

The memory should be distinct and recallable—one that almost “pops” into your head when you look at the object.

All media formats are accepted. You can also use one of the memory toolkits I’ve provided below.

## SUBMITTING ▼

Photograph your object.

Write or record a description of your memory as it relates to the object.

You can send the picture and writing / recording separately, or put them together in the form of:

Media piece (audio slideshow, for example)  
Collage  
Scrapbook page

If you would like help getting started, you can use one of the **Memory Toolkits** available for download below:

**BASIC TOOLKIT** (120KB)

**TOOLKIT EXTRAS** (120KB)

Send your Memory to:

submit@object-memory.com

Once you submit your Memory, it will get put on the site to share.

(Please be aware that whatever you write will be made public!)

## HOW TO SUBMIT A MEMORY ►

### CATEGORIES

MEMORY	MEMORY	MEMORY
FORGETTING	FORGETTING	FORGETTING
OBJECTS	OBJECTS	OBJECTS
SCRAPBOOK	SCRAPBOOK	SCRAPBOOK

### SIDEBLOG

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3.20.2009

SIDEBLOG ARCHIVES

Upon clicking the link “how to submit a memory,” a viewer is taken to this page. Directions as to how to submit are provided as well as both versions of the visual toolkits for download as PDF documents.

Header and sidebar information remain visibly consistent on this page as a means of providing navigation for the viewer.





# ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The Designer of 2015 outlines the trends, competencies, predictions relating to graphic designers in the year 2015. This outline represents a summary of feedback received from the American Institute of Graphic Artists' (AIGA's) Visionary Design Council and questionnaires administered online and at AIGA Conferences.

Bødker, Suzanne. "Creating Conditions for Participation: Conflicts and Resources in Systems Design," *Human Computer Interaction*, 11(3) (1996): 215–236.

Suzanne Bødker advocates the approaches used during Scandinavian collective resource projects can inform, and perhaps improve, participatory design research.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods. Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002.

Bourriaud defines a new aesthetic for art that is not based on form. Rather, it is based on the aesthetics of relationship. Relational art is defined (on page 14) as "an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space."

Davis, Meredith. "Toto, I've Got a Feeling We're Not in Kansas Anymore..." *Interactions Magazine*, Sept/Oct. (2008), 28–34.

Davis responds to the Designer of 2015 initiative in this article, asserting that the trends, competencies, and predictions asserted by the Designer of 2015 should impact the way that graphic design is currently being taught to students.

Dunne, Anthony. Preface to the 2005 edition, *Hertzian Tales: Electronic Products, Aesthetic Experience, and Critical Design*, by Anthony Dunne, xi–xiii. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005.

Dunne argues (on pg. xiii of the 2005 Preface) that “design can be used as a critical medium for reflecting on the cultural, social, and ethical impact of technology.”

Maldonado, Tomás. “Design Education” in *Education of Vision*, edited by Gyorgy Kepes, 122–155. New York: George Braziller, 1965.

Maldonado’s “Design Education” comprises one chapter in the *Education of Vision* book. A worthwhile, but unfortunately out-of-print, book for the designer to read, *Education of Vision* offers essays on visual thinking, design and communication, and visual education from such writers as Paul Rand, Rudolf Arnheim, and Johannes Itten.

National Geographic GeoPedia. “E-Waste,” <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/geopedia/E-Waste>.

Part of National Geographic Magazine’s online “GeoPedia” that describes how E-waste—refuse composed of computers, printers, cell phones, and other electronic devices—has effected the environment detrimentally.

Sanders, Elizabeth B.-N. and Pieter Jan Stappers. “Co-creation and the new landscapes of design,” *CoDesign* 4, no.1 (2008), [www.maketools.com](http://www.maketools.com).

Sanders and Stappers chronicle the shift from user-centered approaches to co-creative approaches in design research. This changing landscape has implications for the designer, and the authors discuss how the role of the designer will change within the context of this shift.

Sanders, Elizabeth B.-N. “From User-Centered to Participatory Design,” (2002), [www.maketools.com](http://www.maketools.com).

Sanders writes about ways to access and learn about people’s experiences, highlighting her own method, *MakeTools*, as one example of a generative design research method.

**South River Science Team. "Dupont,"** <http://www.southriverscienceteam.org/about/participants/dupont/index.html>.

Describes DuPont's historic involvement in the mercury contamination of the South River in Waynesboro, Virginia as well as their affiliation with the South River Science Team.

**South River Science Team.** <http://www.southriverscienceteam.org>.

Website for the South River Science Team that provides background information about their endeavors to locate and remediate the mercury contamination in the South River in and around Waynesboro, Virginia.

**Suri, Jane F. "Informing our Intuition: Design Research for Radical Innovation,"** *Rotman Magazine*, Winter (2008): 53–57.

IDEO Creative Officer Jane Suri writes about her experiences in design research, particularly relating to the area of design innovation. She describes the evolution of design research and its challenges, roles, and methods.





